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ABSTRACT

This document consists of 10 issues of "Australian Homeschool Journal" extrinsic across about a year and a half. This bimonthly serial offers a variety of news, information, and advice for parents who are providing schooling for their children at home. Issues usually contain: (1) articles or reprints of articles from other sources; (2) interviews; (3) resource information; (4) news; (5) announcements of homeschooling workshops, seminars, conferences, or meetings; (6) lists of support groups, newsletters, and organizations; (7) letters to the editor; and (8) editorials. The homeschooling information usually falls into the areas of legal and legislative news and issues, practical issues, educational issues, and family issues. (TJQ)

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Australian Homeschool Journal

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ISSUE 31 NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1991

EDITOR: Jo-Anne Beirne

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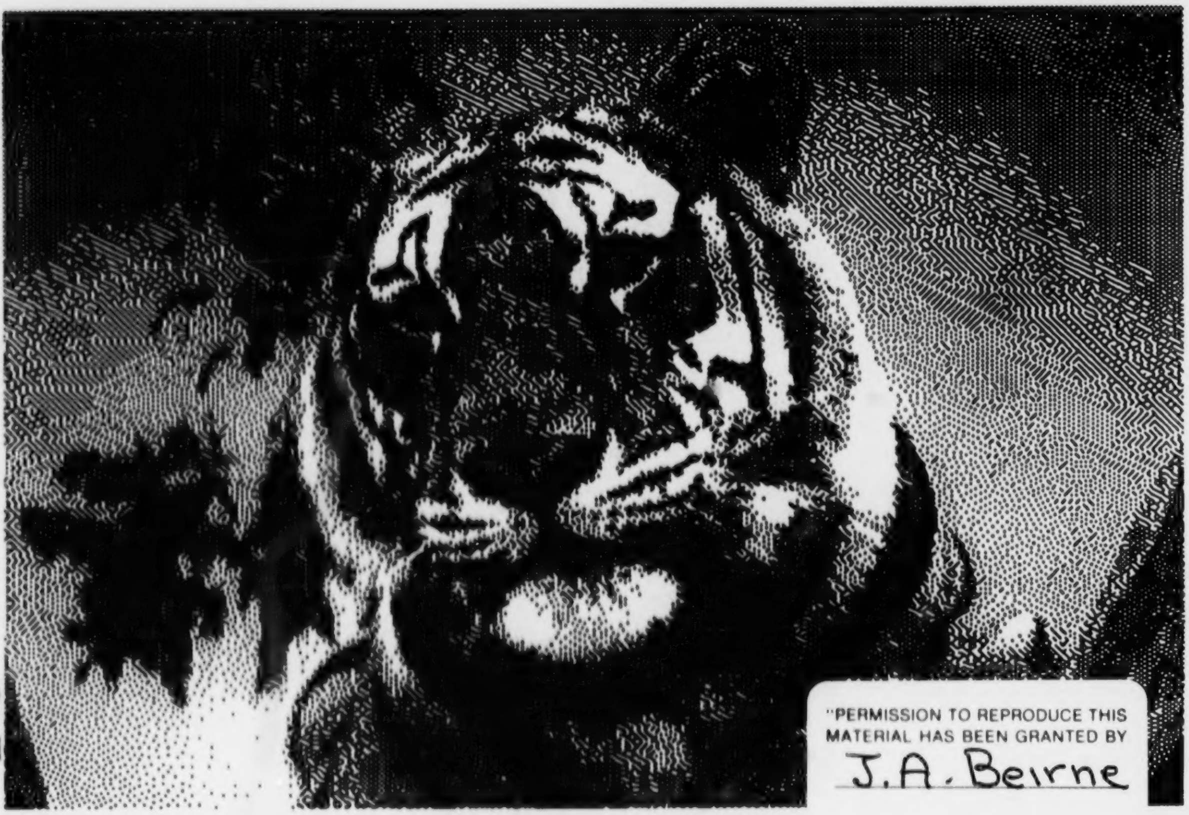

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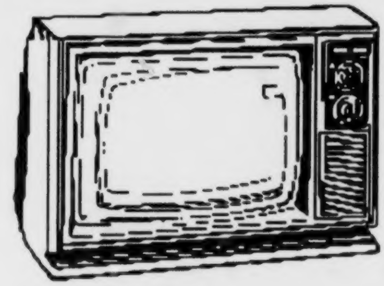


MEDIA

What a year it has been for homeschooling in the media! Just some of the articles, radio and T.V. programmes follow:

On Being - MacAulay, Stone and Crossley families;
Sydney Morning Herald -Beirne family;
Good Morning Australia (10) - Montoya family;
The Today Show on Channel 9 - Pinky Mackay in Melbourne;
HQ Magazine - Clark-Mackay, Dickson, Gollan and other families;
60 Minutes - Brodal-Robertson, Marrett & Beirne families;
Vox- Populi (Channel 0)- Hames, Adams, Armanious, Bailey-Raethel and Beirne families;
ABC Radio in Armidale - Jo-Anne Beirne;
Compass (Channel 2) - Puffett and Stone families;
Simply Living Magazine - Beirne family;
Family Circle - Armanious, Duncanson & Bailey - Raethel families;
Illawarra Mercury - Pinazza family.

Introduction.......

HISTORY

The Australian Homeschool Journal was first published in January 1987 and continued monthly publication for 30 issues until August 1989. At that stage we had subscribers from every state in Australia, as well as the U.S., the U.K & West Germany. However, a combination of four children and exhaustion, from being closely connected with the changing legislation in N.S.W over a 2 year period forced us to cease publication. At this stage I am promising only 6 issues of the new A. H.J and will see how I go.

OUR AIMS

The A.H.J. is committed to emphasizing the diversity of homeschoolers while encouraging the acceptance of homeschooling as an individualised approach to education.

Although I am a practising Christian I intend that the A.H.J. should primarily be concerned with educational matters with a bias towards a "natural" learning or unschooling approach. It seems to me that the specific scriptural and doctrinal needs of homeschooling Christians is admirably met in publications such as Families Honouring Christ, the Family School Magazine and the Teaching Home.

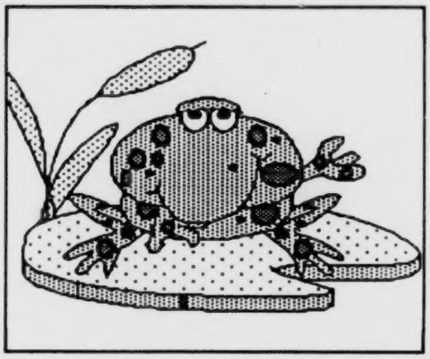
Although the "natural learning" idea was once regarded as a John Holt /secular humanist approach it has been my experience over the last 7 years that long term homeschool parents of very diverse religious and philosophical backgrounds (and their children) eventually come to feel very constricted and limited by the application of highly structured programmes and timetables.

I have always defended and supported (with time, personal expertise and money) the ideal of everyone's right to homeschool, no matter what their religious or educational philosophy. I have fought on behalf of Homeschoolers Australia pty ltd and joined with other organisations whenever there was need to express a united commitment to parents' rights to home educate at a political or administrative level, and will continue to do so. The education of their children is the prime responsibility of parents, whether one chooses to use the state or private system or homeschooling is a matter of choice for the family, not any educational authority or politician.

It is my belief and experience that committed, caring parents are always going to provide a superior spiritual, educational, social, moral and psychological education than the schools can possibly provide through their deep seated convictions about the way children learn, the application of small group tuition, the superior type of socialization they provide and their dedication.

STRONG & DIVERSE SUPPORT GROUPS

I feel there is a great need to have strong homeschool support organisations in each state and feel Australia has many of those in place already. There should always be mutual support between organisations in time of need while each group pursues its own short and long term goals. There are lots of experienced and dedicated homeschoolers and supportive academics all over Australia and they can save us all from having to reinvent the wheel. If this journal can in anyway facilitate this networking it will have achieved something worthwhile and I heartily welcome contributions about activities and areas of concern from all support groups in all states and regions.



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CONTRIBUTIONS

I welcome type written contributions.

* To have an article included in the next A.H.J. please have it to us at P.O. Box 420 Kellyville 2153 by 7th December 1991.

Any ideas or opinions expressed in the articles are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editors, publishers or readers of this magazine.

ADVERTISEMENTS

We welcome advertisements from individuals and organisations who are providing goods and services for homeschoolers.

Advertising rates will be sent upon request.

The inclusion of advertising in Australian Homeschool Journal does not necessarily indicate endorsement by the publishers.

SEMINAR

CONSIDERING/ STARTING HOMESCHOOLING ?

Want to know/dicuss more, see resources, discuss programmes ?

Date: Saturday 16th November

Time: 1-5 p.m

Place: Woodstock Community Center, Church St Burwood

Cost : $ 5

R.S.V.P. By November 12th to Jo-Anne Beirne P.O. Box 420 Kellyville 2153. Please include your name and phone number.

WORKSHOP

TRUSTING KIDS AND NATURAL LEARNING

A short formal presentation followed by an interractive workshop, share your experiences and insights with others about how to extend and faciltiate this type of learning. Can it be done at high school level ?

Date: Saturday 1st February

Time: 1-5p.m. Cost : $ 5

Venue to be confirmed

R.S.V.P. By January 25th to Homeschoolers Aust. P.O. Box 420 Kellyville 2153
(More information in the next issue)

Application of the law in N.S.W.

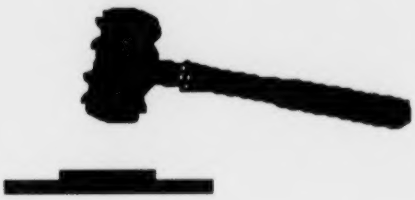
Homeschooling has changed since the bad old days of 87, 88 &'89 !!!

OBSTACLES

Many lucky people will be unaware of the obstacle course that an inspection visit could be in the bad old days when the general attitude was that home school meant "school" at home with paperwork, replicas of teachers programmes, paperwork, extreme concern by administrators about that old bugbear "socialization" and more paperwork. Usually to the detriment of quality interaction time with one's children. Some inspectors took the make and model of the video and T.V., some measured the length and breadth of the room and checked that windows opened and the toilet flushed (I kid you not !!!!). These were the days where The Education Dept. and its employees saw themselves as the prime dispensers and guardians of "preferred knowledge". Times have changed as those who have undergone inspections in the past 7 months will be very aware. If one can dismiss the "fear" of an authority figure who is able to have a say on "whether or not" one homeschools one can be in for a very positive inspection experience.

VISITS

I have received lots of feedback about inspection visits to date and almost without exception people have felt that they have received lots of good advice, encouragement & understanding and that inspectors welcome their individualised approach. So have the courage of your convictions when you prepare your education programme and try to make it reflect what you really believe is important in the education of your individual child.



DIVERSITY ACKNOWLEDGED

Families using programmes of great diversity and philosophy from very structured to an unschooling approach and the A.C.E. programme have all been approved. In the main inspectors have been granting approval for a two year period and in a case where they feel that the approach of a programme in a subject or subjects needs more work they have been happy to come back in a month or two to encourage competent reworking by the parent without pressure. It has always seemed to me that negotiation is the key to getting the best you can out of your homeschooling experience and Board of Studies inspectors have been listening to the concerns of committed homeschooling parents & respecting and encouraging them to pursue their goals.

INSPECTIONS IN 1991

All those families who received their last visit in late 1990 will have received letters notifying them of the imminent commencement of visits for 1991. If you have not please contact the Board of Studies, 925 8111 for an application form. The reapplication forms themselves are single page while the accompanying material provides all the information you need to know as well as giving a good idea of what is expected in the programming of each subject are not as bulky as the initial forms but everyone needs a copy of the first form because it is a great guide to the administrative procedure and appeals process.

GROWTH!

Exact figures are changing weekly but it has been confirmed by The Board of Studies that there are well over 300 individual homeschoolers registered with the Board in N.S.W The figure at the beginning of 1990 was said to be 183 so this represents a significant increase !!!! Applications are being received weekly by the Board so it seems likely that the homeschool movement will maintain steady growth and likely expansion from now on. This is due in no small part to the hard work and negotiation we put in with the Carrick Review Committee and the then Educ. Minister Dr. Terry Metherell. The present Minister Virginia Chadwick is also very supportive and aware of homeschooling and is addressing important issues such as access to the H.S.C for homeschoolers. In fact, homeschooling is growing in every area. John Gollan ,the new Australian coordinator for A.C.E, based at Strathpine in Queensland states that there are 350 families using that

N.S.W.

programme here in N.S.W.

REGISTRATION FORMS

Those in possession of the old Certificates of Exemption will be as impressed as I was with the new Certificates of Registration. Those old certificates of exemption had written on them things like "subject to your satisfying an inspector... and you are reminded that an exemption can be withdrawn at any time if the conditions are not being met", almost as if we were criminals or out on parole, and impossible to display in a portfolio. The new registration forms look good and are a much better acknowledgement of the legitimacy of home education under the law.

Tasmania

Homeschoolers in Tasmania have been involved for some time in a working party, set up by the Minister, to address mutual concerns about the issue of home education, including the large number of homeschoolers in that state.

The working party consisted of many people including John Peacock from T.H.E.M., Georgie Holderness-Roddam, representing the views of non-aligned homeschoolers, an A.C.E representative, Education Dept. oficials etc.

The draft report is now complete and has proceeded to the Minister. All the homeschoolers concerned seemed very pleased with results and it will be great to see a copy of the Minister's recommendations when they are ready.

QLD

Homeschooling in Queensland has been a bugbear for some families for many years. It always makes me mad to think that after 6 years of high quality and very successful homeschooling in N.S.W, if we moved to Qld, I would have to either use the A.C.E. programme, hide from the authorities, employ a registered teacher to supervise my programme (what dos she know about my kids and their learning?) or pay a huge price for the Distance Education programme. After that we are informed there is no option. In other words average parents who can homeschool any where else in Australia are discriminated against in Queensland.

THE ACT

The Act of 1989 did not remove the shortcomings of the Act that went before it.. It says Education (General Provisions) Act 1989 Part V Sections 57 and 58- **Compulsory Education** allows that a child need not be enrolled in a State or non-State school if a dispensation or provisional dispensation is granted in accordance with Section 58. (p.21)

"(a) that the child concerned is receiving, in the opinion of the Minister, instruction—

(i) in a place other than a State school or a non-State school in accordance with guidelines prescribed by Order in Council;

(ii) in a range of subjects acceptable to the Minister, in some other manner which, in the opinion of the Minister is efficient and regular; "(page 21)

MEANING?

The way the act is written these are OR provisions.

1. Homeschooling parents are following the guidelines. OR

2. Homeschooling parents have applied to the Minister for dispensation and he has applied his judgement of regular and efficient instruction.

THE GUIDELINES

The guidelines come in a package titled "Homeschooling - an information booklet" which is contained inside the " Application for Dispensation". The section specifying who shall teach the child is on Page 2 (6.) (a) - a registered teacher (b) a registered teacher employed by the parents (c) if the teaching parent is not a registered teacher then the child must be enrolled in a Distance Educ. course.

[To digress for a second, I believe that the distance educ. programme costs $1000 per year and must be regarded as a cosy little arrangement that restricts parents choice somewhat - you didn't know that the Queensland Education department had the one true and expensive answer to education now did you?]

Qualifications are again mentioned on p.4 Guidelines 4. - a repeat of 6 above. Now if you choose to apply for homeschooling dispensation under 2 (a) (i) you are bound by these guidelines and you must be a registered teacher or have the child enrolled in the distance educ. programme.

MINISTER'S REPLY

I was hoping that if you applied under Section 58 2 (a) (ii) that normal parents who wished to homeschool may in fact be judged under some definition of "regular " and " efficient.". We wrote to the Minister on just this point but his double jeopardy reply does not really answer our problem. (18 September)
"In reply to your specific question, parents of homeschooled children do not have to be registered teachers. They may engage a registered teacher to supervise the instruction of the child, or they may enrol the child in a course of distance education offered by an approved State or non-State school.".

A GOOD STORY?

Interestingly, when I was involved with the 60 Minutes homeschooling segment.. Andrea Keir the producer of the segment was in contact with The Hon. Paul Braddy's (Qld's Education Minister) press secretary and she told her that it was not necessary in Queensland to be a qualified teacher and that there were legitimate avenues for non-certified committed parents to homeschool. Obviously this answer is only a part truth , the legitimate avenues are only available to wealthy or religious families.

QLD PARENTS

It is my experience here at Homeschoolers Australia pty ltd ACN 003 222848 that many parents would like to homeschool in Queensland, but cannot because of the law. I get on average 3 phone calls/ letters per week requesting information about this possibility from intelligent and highly motivated parents who are not registered school teachers, are not religiously aligned with the A.C.E. programme, who cannot afford and/or do not wish to participate in the Dist Educ. programme. The great majority of these people fulfill all the requirements that would make them registered homeschoolers in N.S.W, Vic, W.A., S.A, A.C.T, or Tas.

COMMITTED PARENTS ARE COMPETENT EDUCATORS

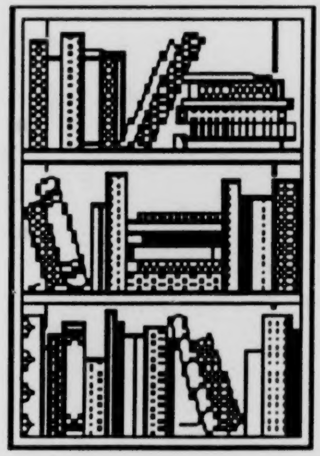
It is my experience that in 99% of cases homeschooling is characterised by caring, concerned and committed parents, devoted to the social, moral, educational, mental and physical growth of their children who are prepared to forgo a second income and commit their time, energy and resources to their children's education. This applies no less to those parents who live in Queensland, who must also be recognised under the Law as intelligent/ competent home educators of their own children.

WE WILL WIN

This fight has only just begun. We are presently preparing a submission on the historical, legal and ethical considerations of homeschooling as a high quality educational option. If you wish you can add your voice to ours, please send a self-addressed stamped envelope to Bob Osmak Lot 2 Caboolture River Rd. Upper Caboolture 4510 or myself Jo-.Anne Beirne at PO. Box 420 Kellyville 2153 and we can co-ordinate a mutual support group to challenge this Act.

W.A.

The Law in W.A. regarding homeschooling while not ideal, is a reasonable and workable one. It says *"That a child under regular and efficient instruction at home or elsewhere of which fact notice in writing has been sent .... shall be a matter for the decision of the Minister, who may require the report of a Superintendent of Education thereon"*
In other words under the Educ Act 1928-1981 Section 14 (a) p.24, The Minister is responsible for deciding a case for or against



W.A

instruction at home. What this means is not that the Minister decides each individual case but that s/he appoints others to decide (e.g Inspectors of School Education) and these people recommend to her. However in cases of dispute, the final decision becomes the Minister's.

THE DECISION

Having the Minister decide can be good for a couple of reasons

1. Often, unwittingly, school authorities have the vested interests of schools and their procedures, jobs, goals and aspirations as their primary concern., whereas a Minister is not bound down by a narrow "school-type" view and can see the benefits of a homeschool approach to education.
2. A Minister is an elected politician and as such they can be sensitive to the wishes of the electorate. They are used to listening to deeply held and widely spread views of a great many people. A Minister is forced to weigh up the reasonableness or otherwise of a proposition, consider the legal aspect of a refusal and come to some fair and impartial decision.

If the decision ultimately rests with the Minister, as it does in N.S.W, Qld, and W.A. for example, we are further protected by a Federal Act called the Administrative Decisions Judicial Review Act [13955] 5 (1) (a)- (i) that is binding in the case of State laws

There is absolutely no purpose in my mind in running scared from Education authorities who purport to be in possession of the power to circumscribe, limit or in anyway prescribe the type of home education programme that we will apply to our children if those rules are unjust and unfair. Instead of enduring unreasonable reports and appalling inspections it becomes imperative to approach the Minister and ensure that justice is done.

DISCRIMINATION

This information is all preface to a case presently before the Education Minister in W.A. Mrs. Kay Hallahan. In 1990, Education authorities proposed Draft Requirements for the Registration of Home Tuition Providers . They sent copies of them, after they were prepared, to groups and individuals connected with homeschooling and these people had a right of reply. Most people with whom I am in contact, including Eamon Murphy at Curtin University were appalled by their restrictive and proscriptive nature, including the advent of 6 monthly visits.

Most homeschoolers wrote to the then Minister about their concerns, however despite the fact that these regulations have in no way been confirmed or sent to homeschoolers they are presently being applied in some cases in a most heavy handed and discriminatory way. I have been in close contact with many W.A. homeschoolers - and have a phone bill to prove it ! and there are cases of concern. For example a highly qualified and committed homeschooling mother with well-educated child, good programme, excellent child's work etc. recently received an inspection visit. While not positive she was given no impression that the inspectors, (there were two inspectors and unfortunately she had not taken the precaution of having a witness present), were in any way unhappy with the educ. programme that she was providing. However, she received a report saying things that were basically lies. She has documentary evidence to prove that every single criticism is unjust, much of it actually presented to the inspectors on the day of their visit.

PREJUDICE

I am confident that the inspectors' report smacks more of prejudice against homeschooling than any perceived interest in the education of the child. Proof of this lies in statements such as *"(the child) did not wish to even discuss the possible advantages of returning to a regular school environment...."* and *"at that point a decision will have to be made about (the child)'s education for 1992"* (note: the inspectors feel they will be making the decision about further homeschooling NOT the parent.).

No -one could read the report and not be convinced that the inspectors are extremely biased educationally and philosophically against the possibility of long term home education.

I am also incensed to hear that many other committed and highly motivated homeschooling families have been putting up with very negative inspection visits and even worse written reports, because they feel scared to rock the boat. These appalling reports that speak of you, your teaching and your child's application stay in your child's record at the Department of Education for ever.

DECIDING TO FIGHT

Under the present W.A. Act there is absolutely no necessity to submit to awful inspection visits. Rather it is a matter for a group of articulate, intelligent parents to present a case pro-homeschooling, including sensible regulations, to the Minister..

People who do not personally know homeschoolers have a great problem with adjusting to the idea that parents want to provide their own children with an education. Inspectors, authorities, the Minister, your local member all need to know that homeschooling is a growing, responsible and high quality educational movement, that cannot be regulated into obscurity.

We live in a democracy but the price of our freedom is eternal vigilance (who said that?). Homeschoolers must support each other and MUST object when they are unjustly treated. There is no need for anyone to suffer because they homeschool..

HOMESCHOOLING FREEDOMS

Despite our different localities we fight the same battle, for the freedom of the family and individuals to choose the option of home education without harassment or unnecessary restriction.

We live in a democracy, where the rights of individuals are respected but the rights of those who speak up are even more respected. There is no need for any homeschooler to feel powerless when they can justify as unfair a law, guidelines, decision, inspection or report. There are local, state and national support groups who can put you in contact with someone who can help in any situation or at least devise a strategy to approach a solution. However it should be remembered that no-one represents you better than yourself.

For this reason I would like to encourage each homeschooler, when it is necessary, to make a stand at point of contact, on the issues that effect the quality of your home educating lives. Some important things to remember are

1. Give a bureaucrat an inch and s/he may take a mile, power becomes greater when it is not challenged .
2. If you don't deal with a problem when it is small it is going to get bigger.
3. If you don't complain, it is presumed you HAVE NOTHING that you are unhappy about.

If they have your permission (in that they receive no complaints) to regulate and criticise your home education programmes/ approach / set-up they will do just that because they presume they know best in this educational field as well as the school field- courtesy of titles and degrees. Of course they will then decide that they know better than you in the area of socialization and home education in general because you have given them permission to comment in the first place.

The fact is that education legislation all over Australia while not perfect is good (or has the potential for change in the case of Qld). In some cases it is applied in a heavy handed and discriminatory way - i.e. the same rules are not applied to schools which are funded through the public purse. I believe we all should make the time and energy to handle our own individual issues as they arise - if you object to six monthly visits write and tell the Minister why, if you receive an untrue report send it back with comments and complaints as soon as possible - in that way you are all indirectly supporting each other, without need of a massive top heavy organisation to tell you what to do. If you take each issue as it arises and explain your philosophy/ methods/ commitment with intelligence and patience to the bureaucrats and politicians you have a powerful chance to influence long term decision making. I hope none of you decide that you can live with the chains they have or may put on you, I never will.

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A Week of Homeschooling

by Carolyn Wilcher

Perhaps one of the most asked questions to do with homeschooling are "But how do you teach all those subjects?" This article, printed in the original Resource Book for Home Educators, (Homeschoolers Australia pty ltd 1989) answers this question beautifully.

One cold winter's day last week, as my 6 year old daughter, Amy, snuggled up on her grandmother's knee and watched our video recording Seven-Network's presentation of "A Climate in Crisis", a discussion arose. As often happens, I needed to simplify the dialogue so that Amy could understand more easily. She wanted to know about coal and the "dirty smoke" it makes. I explained simply that we burn coal to make electricity and that we can help make our earth and air better by not using too much electricity. Later, after sunset, Amy went around turning all the lights off, as she had heard on the program that this would help. This led to a discussion on electricity and what life must have been like before electricity - how people used candles for light. At this point I remembered that my brother had a candle-making set as a young boy. A phone call later and the candle kit was ours! This has expanded into a whole unit of work on candles. I call it a "unit of work" but that's just a fancy way of saying we had lots of fun learning about candles, and without trying, covered every "school" subject. Our week went something like this:

The following morning we set to work to make out first candle. (Craft). After preparing the mould and taping the wick in place we proceeded to melt the wax by placing it in a tin and standing the tin in a pan of hot water. Learning experience - we applied heat to a solid which melted to become a liquid. We poured the liquid into the mould which when cooled, became a solid. (Science)

We took a trip to our local library and looked up "Candles" in the catalogue and found a book called "The Great Candle Scandal" by Jean Chapman, a children's story book which we borrowed. Amy enjoyed listening to the story and reading those parts she could. We discussed uses of candles in the past (Oral Language, History) and present, e.g. Birthday celebrations, Weddings, Christmas, uses of candles in church (Social Studies, Religious Education). We discussed fire safety, use of matches, how to put out a "body " fire by rolling on the ground, or by smothering the flames with a blanket, etc. We talked about the fact that flames need fuel and proved this by placing an upturned jar over a lighted candle and watching the flame go out as it used up the oxgyen. (Science)

I scribed Amy's personal story about a candle which she dictated(Creative writing) and illustrated (Pre-writing skills). We counted candles and matched and sorted them into groups of tens and ones (Maths) and wrote down the correct answers (Writing Numerals). We put the candles in order according to size from the largest to the smallest (Maths).

We sang the song "Five Little Candles" (Music) which involves counting backwards from 5, thereby incorporating the concept of "one less" (Maths).

It happens to be my birthday this week so we made a cake (Science) involving weighing and measuring (Maths) and counting the correct number of candles for my age (Maths).

We made a candle holder out of clay (Craft), enjoyed our evening meals together by candlelight, while discussing, at Amy's prompting, the greenhouse effect (Environmental Studies) and topped the candle studies off with a family excursion to the Argyle Soap and Candle Shop at the Rocks in Sydney.

Just as one wave gathers another, rolling into one and ultimately coming to land on the beach, so was this whole learning experience on Candles. One idea led into another and then another until they all rolled into one and reached the same destination - a knowledge and understanding of candles and their uses. Integrated Learning in a nutshell !!!

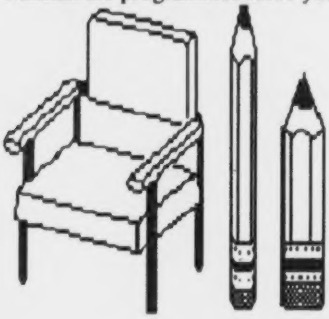
Resource Information

ENGLISH - POETRY

We recently discovered an interesting, concise and well-written book called Poetry in Many Forms by Lesley Pyott and published by Longman Cheshire - $10.75. It seems to me that it could be used over a whole range of age groups as it explains, with the use of many wonderful examples, the seven distinct types of poetry: Free verse, Concrete verse, Haiku, Narrative, Descriptive, Ballads, Limericks. If you never really understood onomatopoeia (or could spell it), or the difference between metaphors and similes you will probably find yourself as absorbed in the book as I did. The choices of verse are also a lovely mixture of old and new including some Shakespeare.

MATHEMATICS

For those who have found the new K-6 Maths syllabus inspiring- especially the emphasis on spatial concepts there are two fun (and thoroughly absorbing) computer programmes available that will give lots of practice in these areas. They are Tetris and Welltris distributed by Dataflow. Developed by a Russian the programmes force you to visualise numbers of blocks in a variety of rotations and then place them into an ever expanding grid. Tetris does this in a 2D approach, Welltris takes the concept further and makes it almost 3D forcing you to estimate, visualise, rotate, calculate and EXASPERATE at an ever faster pace. This parent tends to hit the panic button, but needless to say the kids don't bat an eyelid. It has been our experience that those children who are not usually crazy about computer games find Tetris most enjoyable and are not as likely to become discouraged as it has 10 ability levels and is very mentally satisfying.



MUSIC

Are you aware that there is a group called Pan Pacific Music Camps? [P.O. Box 614 Blacktown N.S.W. 2148 (02) 671 6801] This group of people, in association with Rotary International run very professional music camps in the Christmas Holidays for children and adults including a Prep Music Camp 2-5 January (5-9 years old) a Junior Music Camp 2-7 Jan (10-14 years old). The directors and guests for the camps are highly respected people in their fields and the activities planned look very interesting. After these camps they hold specialist music technology, saxophone, flute,violin and piano schools.

COMPUTERS

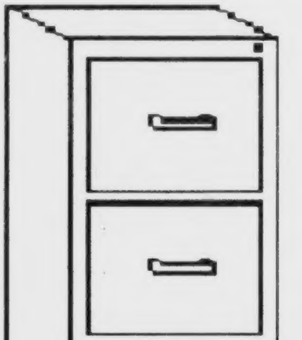
Dataflow computer company will send you a free copy of their catalogue if you write to them at DATAFLOW P.O. Box 525 Kings Cross 2011

Computer Programme Review:

Sim City - Although we have found that this programme is able to be mastered by children as young as 7, who have the interest and reading ability to do so, I believe it is also being used in some Universities for 1st year architecture students. In Sim City you get the opportunity to take charge of an evolving and growing city. You collect taxes, design public transport needs, build houses, bulldoze bushland (or not) manipulate property values, handle cyclones, fires etc. There is a lot of feedback, for instance when a city gets too large the programme forces you to make decisions about pollution, transport and power options. The cities can be saved and worked on over a long period of time and it requires a lot of thought. For instance I don't know how I could have ever incorporated a "schoolwork type unit" on "light industry" into a K-6 "programme" yet our little town planners are very aware of the importance of light and heavy industry for employment levels in their cities. The price is around $79.95 and Sim City is made for every popular computer.

SCIENCE

Two homeschooling parents Greg Baker and Robin Jean have recently written a book called Communication: A Book of Activities and Information for the Australian Science Teacher's Assoc. 1991 Australian Science in Schools Week. It covers a wide range of activities for children Primary 5-6 and Secondary 7-10. Greg says "Although primarily designed for school teachers there is no reason why any homeschooling parent could not help a child work through the activities at home or indeed that a child could not work through the activities themselves." They cost $4 each (includes post & packaging) and are available from Mr. Robin Groves G.P.O. Box 2682, Canberra A.C.T.2601.



SCIENCE TEACHING A NEW APPROACH

I was interested to read an article by the scientist and respected journalist Peter Pockley on 18.8.91 (Sun Herald p.40) about the intention of The International Conference on Chemical Education to "help make more relevant to life the subject of chemistry." (England on the 24-25th of August).

Without realising he was doing it I believe that Peter Pockley's article made a brilliant argument for the way some homeschoolers teach their children science - including chemistry. I quote "Most school pupils have been introduced to chemistry and its theory in a logically ordered progression. When I look back on my own approach, as recorded in a textbook I wrote on physical chemistry in the 1960's, I realise how difficult it must be for average students to grasp the significance of, say, atomic and molecular theory or reaction kinetics. Such concepts may be central to the chemistry laboratory but they are quite foreign to everyday experience and a curriculum which force feeds such theory into students will only capture commitment from the most highly motivated."

".....Reformers of the chemistry curriculum are turning to building an understanding of the subject from the materials and **matters of ordinary life.**" The approach he says is "applications led and builds on students' experience of their own world." e.g. " A unit on sunlight brings in concepts of radiation and spectroscopy." A company called Salters has sponsored a curriculum that has recently been explained at the University of Technology - "Students taking the course do not have to grind through a weighty textbook from beginning to end."

The article made me smile as it sounded awfully like application of the principles of homeschooling to me - starting from real life experiences then answering/introducing relevant learning needs!

LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

Some families who decide to homeschool do so for the specific reason that their child has been labelled a "learning difficulties" child. This presents special challenges to the parent and child in coming to terms with what has gone before and developing a strategy that will ensure learning success and enjoyment in the future. I am happy to help set up a support group for those parents who feel they might want to discuss this issue specifically and the ways they have found to help their special children.

SUPPORT GROUP

If you would like to help start a support group of homeschoolers dealing with learning difficulties please drop me a note containing a stamped self-addressed envelope about same and I will get the first meeting organised.

AN IMPORTANT BOOK ABOUT LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

An extra special book I have recently read on the subject and highly recommend to anyone interested in pursuing the issue is The Learning Mystique - A Critical Look at Learning Disabilities by Gerald Coles published by Fawcett Columbine. Gerald Coles is associate professor of Clinical Psychiatry at Rutgers Medical School. His articles have appeared in The Harvard Educational Review, Science and Society, The Journal of Special Education, Learning Disability Quarterly. Another interesting article on the issue, which is a good deal more readable is available from Holt Associates and titled "Everyone is Able : Exploding the Myth of Learning Disabilities".

P.E.T.A. - The Primary English Teachers Association

Many of you will be aware of The Primary English Teachers Association. I always find their bimonthly material interesting and thought provoking.

DYSLEXIA or DYSTEACHIA ?

Sometimes the P.E.T.A material is especially good for reminding me just how we can take for granted the natural learning we do at home. In PEN 82 for example this classic quote is in a paragraph entitled The Importance of Oral Language "Oral language is a vital resource for communication (amazing!!), for learning and personal growth, and yet it is often treated incidentally in our classrooms. We take great care for instance to deliberately plan for writing for different purposes and in different contexts.......".

One wonders how they can be serious about programming classroom time for oral language development. Surely if they just let the children out of the classroom and gave them more free time they could develop their own oral language, given that they learnt a language totally without tuition between the ages of 0 and 5 years. Interesting that the whole learning difficulties business is concerned with the "reading" & "writing" fields i.e. those where "programmed" development occurs, it is widely acknowledged that even children teachers label as having severe reading and writing problems are always perfectly capable in the areas of oral language.

Perhaps this will change when they timetable, as one teacher does in a sample in PEN 82, activities such as "talk in different contexts, (that suit the classroom of course), talk as performance/product, listening in formal situations, awareness of how discourse is structured , conversations (e.g. telephone) - presumably a play telephone about a make-believe topic instead of real conversation about real concerns). One wonders that if 0-5 year olds realised just how mammoth is the timetabling involved in their learning of grammar, syntax, expression, vocabulary etc. whether they would ever undertake the job at all, especially given many of them learn from, save us, unqualified parents!!!

i' ll SEA YA IN CORT !!!

PEN 83 is also interesting as Peter Williams discusses the Legal Dimensions to the Teaching Process. He asks and answers the question about whether the time is coming when children will sue their schools and teachers for bad advice and career damage due to bad teaching. It is the feeling of many that here in Australia we will soon see court cases arguing just these issues.

GIFTED & TALENTED

Hawker Brownlow Education is a major textbook supplier and supporter of gifted and talented education in Australia. They are committed to importing and producing a broad range of resources, and have started printing a newsletter full of information, articles and challenges for parents and children with this special interest. For more information their address is 235 Bay Rd. Cheltenham Victoria 3192, Ph (03) 555 1344

BOSTON UNIVERSITY WELCOMES HOMESCHOOLERS

Dr Moore has sent me a copy of an interesting letter from George A. Schiller the Director of Undergraduate Admissions at Boston Uni. It says in part "If you are a homeschooled student interested in attending or simply concerned to know more about your options in higher education we would be pleased to talk with you. Dr Moore has also received a similar letter from Harvard University. I will share information received from registrars around Australia on homeschoolers attending universities in the next issue.

ADVENTIST HOMESCHOOL NEWSLETTER

The first edition of the Adventist Homeschool newsletter arrived in September for those wishing to subscribe or know more please write to Vada Kum Yuen P.O. Box 1252 Mareeba Qld 4880.

WHERE DO I GET THE MOORES' BOOKS ?

All the Moores books are available from Koorong Bookshop, which has branches in most states. I highly recommend the book Homeschool Burnout for anyone considering either taking up or giving up home education. Mind Your Own Business, their new book, is also a very good read.

FATHERS & TEACHING

The very well known homeschooling researchers, advocates & authors Raymond and Dorothy Moore were brought to Australia by homeschooler Beverley Hogg and others in 1988. I recorded some of their talks and one of the things Dorothy had to say on one of the tapes was "...........Some research recently said that fathers spent less than 0.5% of their time teaching their children. But too often we think of teaching in a very specific narrow way. For instance if the father is cleaning the car and a child is helping him, or they are shopping , playing sport or even sitting together they are talking, responding and communicating about lots of things, the child will be imitating what dad is doing and sharing in his lifetime of experience. Whatever you are doing together you are teaching - so dads are probably doing a great more than they are actually given credit for and by rights it should be called laboratory or practical teaching time."

MARY PRIDE'S BOOKS ?

These well known and informative books, in a brand new edition are also available from Koorong Bookshop .

WHAT IS TEACHING ANYWAY?

Interestingly enough the word teach actually means "to show" . The word goes back to the Indo-European base *deik- which is pronounced in Greek as 'show'. (Bloomsbury Dictionary of Word Origins)

QUESTIONS MUM

"How do you think you'll like homeschooling?" was a question asked of a child who was recently removed from school. "I can't wait, every time I want to ask the teacher a question she sends me back to my desk, I am going to ask so many questions and find out so many answers!!!"

LEARNING BECAUSE YOU WANT TO KNOW

Homeschoolers have always endorsed the idea that you learn most when you really want to and I was recently priviledged to see just this happen over a three day period. A young homeschooler I know really wants to pursue the career of acting, an audition came up where she was required to play piano. Despite this child's dislike of learning the piano and despite the fact that lessons hadn't been taken on the instrument for well over 6 months, within three days she had, of her own accord, mastered a quite difficult piece, way above what would be regarded as her possible achievment level - not an expert or with brilliant technique but nonetheless with competence and determination. She was rightly proud of herself and quite surprised at her achievement, it taught all of us a very valuable lesson about her own ability to learn when self motivated..

ADVERTISEMENTS

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CARTWRIGHT COMMUNICATIONS

My husband and I sell IBM compatible computers and software for Amiga, Atari, Apple and MS Dos. I can get software for homeschoolers at a greatly reduced price. The hitch is that unless you live nearby, I cannot help you install the software- (luckily homeschoolers are well educated and know how to do this anyway.) I can also have catalogues sent to your home. If you want an IBM computer I can get you the best price. Give me a call on 047 39 6650.

Sue Cartwright.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Natural Learning

by Helen Hegener

Helen & Mark Hegener edit a brilliant 60+ page journal from Washington, U.S.A. called

Natural learning, sometimes referred to as unschooling, is one of the more interesting and controversial aspects of the homeschooling movement. It calls for a kind of faith that few people possess these days. One of my favourite quotes comes from the book 'How Children Learn'. In the foreword John Holt wrote "All I am saying in this book can be summed up in two words "Trust Children." Nothing could be more simple or more difficult. Difficult, because to trust children we must trust ourselves and most of us were taught as children that we could not be trusted. And so we go on treating children as we ourselves were treated, calling this 'reality,' or saying bitterly 'If I could put up with it, they can too'."

Over the course of the past few years it has become evident that homeschooled children can learn in many different ways, other than those laid down by the schools. The lock-step methods have been shown for what they are: simply a convenient means of controlling large numbers of children day after day. In reality, children don't need the coercion, the threats, the demands, or the bribery. They'll learn, in their own good time and in their own unique ways, how to read, to write, to spell, to do arithmetic. They'll figure out plenty of science and history, they'll learn about health, music, and what the schools call social studies. They'll concentrate on what interests them, and they'll ignore what doesn't but over the course of time they'll arrive at a good balance - however they choose to define that for themselves.

But is natural learning simply letting children learn about the subject areas that schools have defined in their own way and when they're ready for it? No. There's much more to life than social studies and spelling. Children need to learn stuff like responsibility, judgment, perserverance, respect, discipline, independence. Many parents can accept that a child will eventually be able to teach himself to read, but to be responsible? That's asking for a real leap of faith, isn't it? And yet why shouldn't our children be just as interested in becoming responsible, caring adults as we are in seeing them become so? Why the attitude that unless we steer the ship it will run aground?

Ever notice how many books there are on how to get your children to do what they're told? Disobedient, rebellious teenagers (as well as younger children) are the basis of many popular cartoons. It seems to be universally accepted, like a distaste for tripe and onions. Why can't we let go of the notion that unless we adults (who know best) dictate the lives of our children (who don't know anything), they'll naturally turn out to be shiftless, lazy, irresponsible and a burden on society? Homeschooling parents have a singular opportunity to change this misguided perception, but we ourselves will have to embrace it fully before we can convince anyone else of the idea's merit.

An Interview with Don Haddon
from the N.S.W Board of Studies
by Jo-Anne Beirne

I recently had the opportunity to interview Don Haddon who is presently co-ordinating inspection visits by Board Of Studies inspectors. Don Haddon was an inspector of homeschoolers under the old legislation so has, with homeschoolers, been witness to some big changes.

Who is in charge of homeschooling?
The Minister, Mrs Chadwick is completely responsible for homeschooling. However, the administration of homeschooling is undertaken using Board of Studies inspectors, through an organisational structure which is called the Homeschooling Unit, using Board of Studies inspectors and Liason Officers. These officers are known as Authorised Persons.

How do you see your role in an inspection?
As Authorised Persons we have a multi-faceted role. Primarily it is our responsibility to see that the guidelines are being covered. Then we can be a source of advice and support in areas such as the direction that programs are or could be heading and information about particular , relevant resources of which we are have personal knowlegde.

How does this role differ from the one you had as an inspector under the old legislation.?
It seems to me that the new role allows us the opportunity to foster an ongoing relationship with and support to families and to combine our inspection role with one of an advisor or consultant, in a less judgmental way than previously perceived. Under the old Act there were requirements that one might tick and and cross and so the exemption was determined in this formally structured manner, i.e. there were definitive rules governing programming, documentation, timetables, diaries, environment etc. Under the new Act we are able to be more flexible and able to respond to the individual familes and their homeschooling, in a less structured way but still in the light of the guidelines.

3. What are your functions as Authorised Persons ?
1. To respond to the application for registration as required by the Law.
2. To become an administrative structure between homeschoolers and the Minister.
3. To attend to an inspection visit, where our prime concerns are that the family is fulfilling the requirements of the guidelines including programming, documentation, resources etc..

How are inspectors chosen to visit families?
Despite their expertise and qualifications in other areas few of the Authorised Persons had undertaken homeschooling visits previous to their induction in February 1991. So this year has been a learning experience for us all. Initially visits are apportioned geographically, however in some cases this has or will lead to overload. In these cases the Board's other Authorised Persons are allocated families to visit and this year I have done a substantial number of visits myself. We understand that many homeschoolers believe there are advantages in consistency of inspections i.e. that a family sees the one Authorised Person if at all possible, and we are mindful of this consideration when allocating visits.

What have been the greatest difficulties and pleasures of your own visits thus far?
One of the difficulties is that some families assume that we can do some or all of the initial work for a family who wishes to be registered. It is not our duty to assemble programs and collect very basic information, that is the role of the parents themselves. Parents must access the relevant information themselves - often this is done most efficiently through homeschooling support groups and teacher friends. We all have a certain amount of time to spend on a visit and we expect that families will have taken the initiative in preparing themselves adequately for the important role they are undertaking. We would expect not to have to spend an enormous amount of time explaining each individual guideline and its application but that parents will have done this for themselves.The pleasures on the other hand have been many, we have seen lots of enthusiastic and well prepared parents, lots of fine work and pleasant children and we have partaken of lots of delicious treats prepared by competent homeschooling children.

What advice would you give ?
1. Make sure you are thoroughly aware of procedures and requirements.
2. Seek advice and resources from more experienced homeschoolers.
3. Remember that homeschooling is an enormous commitment.

Won't They Be "DIFFERENT?"

Becky Olson

"Aren't you doing your kids a disservice by homeschooling? I mean, how will they fit into the real world if they haven't been schooled like everyone else? Won't they be different?"

"I sure hope so!" I wanted to say. "I really want my children to be different!" Her question was honest enough. She was concerned about my kids' futures. I don't think she would have ever understood if I'd tried to explain to her why different is good. So I just smiled and said, "Well, they seem to fit in most everywhere," as I glanced past her shoulder at my youngest daughter scooping up her baby and the rest pairing off, already finding common interests.

Our society pays great lip service to "being your own person." Several years ago a TV commercial applauded the individual who took the last exit off the freeway in search of his uniqueness. we still idolize the Horatio Alger ideals of fortitude, hard work, and the concept that "anyone can work their way to the top." Chances are now that one of those fictional boys would have difficulty getting a job, because in reality independent thinking and self taught skills are not valued.

Yes, those of us that have opted to homeschool are working to help increase the value of being able to think through a problem and find the solution, either independently or in a team. When you watch a young child that has bonded well with his parents and the world around, that has been encouraged to use explorative powers, the child doesn't sit down in defeat when he comes to an obstacle in the path. This free thinking individual puzzles out a way to overcome, or use the barrier instead of fighting it. In fact if it is indeed an insurmountable obstacle, the child may just sit down and explore it. The child may choose, too, to accept the obstacle as a quest too big to conquer today. He may turn his back and leave this for another time. Or the child may call to a larger person - parent, friend, or sibling - to help move the obstruction.

This same child, in later years, if left to use his own creativity, will face all challenges the same way. Speaking, reading, arithmetic, roller skating and calculus will all be looked upon as a conquerable challenge, if not today, then perhaps tomorrow, next week, or next year.

One of the amazing attributes I see in homeschooling people is they don't take their validation from their "book larnin'." My own children have given up trying to convince adults that knowing the multiplication tables or the capital of South Dakota is not an indication of their learning abilities. Data is not valuable in and of itself, but rather is gathered and stored to be used later on. Whether the use is to answer a trivia question, solve a math problem or write a letter, each is an equally respectable reason for using the information.

As my oldest becomes a teenager, she doesn't feel a need to give in to peer pressure if it makes her uncomfortable. All her life *she* has decided what is the upper limit of her involvement with anything--from sleep, to reading, to multiplication tables, to jumping into the

Becky Olson is long time homeschooling advocate and a frequent contributor to these pages. She and her husband Paul, the homeschooling parents of five, make their home near Tucson, Arizona.

deep end of a swimming pool. If she wasn't comfortable with it or didn't see a valuable reason for doing it, she wouldn't do it. These skills are a great help to her in making the decisions teens must make daily. Peer pressure is a factor in her life, but not *the* deciding factor.

Children that are home most of their young life learn to get along with people of all ages. Homeschooled kids make great babysitters, because they enjoy being with people. I'm always amazed at how patient these kids are with little ones as well as adults. These baby-sitters seem to innately understand the value of play, and enjoy sitting down to simple board games, or more complex computer games, with the child they are taking care of. Because self-esteem is high, the younger child often teaches the older one the rules of the board game and the tricks of the computer game. Information is shared equally.

These same kids seldom get impatient with a well meaning adult who talks down to them in a store or rushes over to prevent them from touching a breakable object. They smile, step back, and still look at the beautiful item. Sometimes they ask questions about the item, or call me over to share the view. If I sense a real need for the child to touch it, I'll hold it and let the child explore it gently with their fingers. Often the clerk will comment on how gentle the child is with fragile items.

Children that don't find their days cut up into blocks of time have the healthy ability to go with the flow. Having been allowed to explore things until they are finished, they have a higher frustration limit. Most often they understand that the project will be waiting for them when they return. I rarely find homeschool parents complaining about the lack of attention span their children have. More often than not, the parents are frustrated by the child's need to follow a course of study to the very end, along with several detours into other disciplines that contributed to the original project.

One young woman's fascination with cats led her and her mother on many an exploratory search through the public library, encompassing ancient and medieval history, genetics, animal husbandry, biology, literature, archeology, anthropology, and a half dozen more subjects. Once she started, every contributing discipline had to be methodically explored. Some books were read to answer one specific question, others were explored cover to cover, and many of these led off to other studies. By the time the fascination has become a glowing ember instead of a blazing need, an amazing amount of information had been covered, as well as the satisfaction of following a project from beginning to end. Skills had been learned to facilitate the search for information: use of the library card catalog, reading and note taking skills improved, and so on, but these were tools to help answer questions. There was no written report to enable someone else to decide whether the work had been worthwhile, or had been done correctly, or had followed arbitrary parameters set by an authority figure. The girl was pleased with what she had learned and that was the only validation she needed.

For many years the buzz word in big business has been "team work." This has been a difficult concept for Americans to take to heart. From preschool on children are taught that when the final countdown comes, winning is why the game is played. Although adults admonish children to share, sharing the credit for an accomplishment at the office can spell doom. The driving force of America is competition, one-up-manship, winning.

As I watch homeschooled kids interact, so many times the challenge of the game seems far more important than winning. When they choose up sides for a ball game, little ones are just as valued as big players. When winning isn't the answer, it's not necessary to degrade the lack of skills one player may have.

My son and his friend were competing with each other on a computer game. After it was all done, their satisfaction was defined as a comparison. "I'm almost as good as Stephen in this game, and he is as good as I am in the other game." Neither of these two boys' self esteem rested on beating the other, only upon improving skill levels.

The problem solving skills that these children are learning in their independent exploration of the world will, indeed, make them different. Being different is always a challenging path. With challenge comes growth and independent thinking. Above all of that comes happiness. Those of us involved in helping nurture a "different" person are different, too. When we, like the toddler, stop fighting the obstacle in our path, and accept and explore it, we find happiness in our peace. This is the gift we pass on to our "different" children.

HEM

Going to School Part-time

An Interview with Brydon Raethel

by Jo-Anne Beirne

Brydon Raethel is 13 years old and he has always been homeschooled. Since second term this year he has had his first regular (part-time) experience with school doing science. I asked him why he decided to go to school and what he thought about the experience.

When & why did you start at school and how often do you go?
Mum arranged with the Principal for me to start in a Year 7 class at the beginning of second term at my local high school. I attend whenever there are science periods and I stay for the break after them. I went because I wanted to do more chemistry than we were able to do at home with our own equipment.

So, what is it like?
Well it takes ages to get organised and if the kids just settled down we'd get twice as much work done as we do, things that should take 5 minutes take 15 to organise. I think that the advantages are that the teacher is a specialist, there is a good library there that I can use, they have good materials and equipment to use. The disadvantages are that the teacher can't give you much individual attention, there is lots of copying from the board, there is major hassle about 3cm margins and title and spelling pages. Some kids treat the teachers really disrespectfully and insult them, the ringleader of the group is disruptive and some of them talk a lot more than they should.

What do you think you've learned?
I've learned a lot of stuff that is really interesting, but I thought it would be better than it was. Now I've had the experience I realised that I thought it would be more practical. Unfortunately they had done chemistry mostly in Term 1 and only a little of it was done in Term 2 - the things we did do in chemistry were really great though like looking at battery acid and its effect on sugar crystals. The chemistry teacher was good. The science teacher since then has done some good things too like how geographical forces work and the San Andreas fault and sediments, but I knew a lot of these things already.

How did you know these things?
I read about them in NI magazine. It has a lot of information about the problems faced by third world countries, as well as about politics and the environment and I read lots of other things too.

How did the kids treat you or did you know some of them before you went?
I didn't know anyone and they teased me a bit. I didn't get in with any of the "in" groups but I make friends easily and I was able to make friends with kids not easily accepted into the group including a Taiwanese kid and a shy kid.

You are moving soon so do you plan to go to school near your new house?
No, I don't think so. I really enjoyed going but I didn't learn as much as I thought I would, I would encourage other kids to go just for the experience if they wanted to try out what it is like to be at school.

Preparing a Portfolio for/with your child

by Jo-Anne Beirne

As education is an ongoing process that mostly happens in institutions, many people feel that they are able to gauge the relative successes and failures of a child's education by teachers' reports, assessments, exam results, etc.

Children who attend school mostly have these types of achievement records kept for them over long periods of time by their schools, their ultimate school results being the state matriculation exam.

Homeschoolers do not choose the standard 'school' types of ongoing testimony to their children's education. Nonetheless our children will eventually have to go into the normal fields of work and academia and compete with those who have the "acceptable/normal" criteria of educational success. It seems to me a good idea for us to have our own catalogue of the different but very high quality education our home educated children have received while they were being educated.

WHEN DO I START?

There is no need to start this type of portfolio before Grade 6 or 7, other than for your own, or your child's, personal interest and edification.

HOW WILL IT LOOK ?

The portfolio should be something that is able to grow, convenient to store, portable and easy care. One example of a portfolio would take the form of a ring folder with plastic sheets that contained some of the following or similar documents.

1. Awards for community service or participation activities e.g clean-ups, work with old people or young children.
2. Church service or youth group commendations etc.
3. Certificates for competitions entered e.g. exams, local Art exhibitions etc
4. If your child works part-time or in a voluntary capacity references from people that the child may have helped or worked with e.g. "I have found John to be a highly motivated, community-oriented honest individual who has performed every task that I have set him to the utmost of his capabilities........". Don't ever be too shy to ask for these types of references as your child's future may be helped by them.
5. Yearly notes or assessment from 'outside- the-home' teachers e.g. gymnastics, soccer, tennis, ballet, music etc. Also any details of levels reached or exams passed in these types of activities.
6. Photographs of your child pursuing their normal activities receiving awards or participating in drama, eisteddfods, sport etc. activities may also be a valuable part of their portfolio.
7. Your own 'school-type' personal (and as your child gets older, their own) records of academic achievements.

ASSESSMENTS

There are many ways to undertake this task, none of which should take the place of or be a substitute for real time spent exploring and learning. Parents who do not wish to assess their own children may wish to get a school teacher/psychologist or one of the testing organisations to give their child a standardised test on a regular basis.

On the other hand parents who do not wish to use these types of tests could either make up their own at the end of each year - based on the work covered, or just make an overall, written view (given that we are extremely close to the children all year and very aware of what they are doing). Results obtained and the tests themselves may be filed in the portfolio for posterity.

Forms of ASSESSMENT

The assessment should take the form that is most suitable and convenient for you and most easily readable for a prospective employer or registrar. The type of assessment may change from year to year and could include some of the following (not in any order of importance)

1. Independent external assessment results and comments and/or

2. A neat typed, dated year by year copy of studies undertaken under subject then topic headings (at high school level) - with some comments, samples of work (i.e. your programme).and/or

3. Comments made by homeschool inspectors should be requested and if relevant to the child's achievements they could be kept in the portfolio and/or

4. At the end of every year a list of your child's academic and extra-curricular activities could be made. (This list will be easily accessible if you have your programme, your child's work or have kept a basic daily or weekly record of learning.)

You might like to convey this information in the form of a table mentioning application, self motivation, in-depth study, understanding, written or oral work or you might choose another way.

Mathematics is an area where it is very important to keep easily readable records. A survey done among a large number of employers in 1989 showed that 97% of them would choose an applicant with high maths marks above any other applicant for any job - even one where mathematics was not part of the job itself. The next most important subjects/marks to employers were Economics, English, Computer/ Technology respectively.

5. Easy to read numerical tables of achievement, especially in Maths.

6. Personal evaluations of achievement.

7. Dated, pictorial/ documentary evidence of the child's undertakings including work in the areas required by the education department in your state and any extra that they may have completed beyond the state requirements. Samples of projects e.g art/science/social studies could be included.

EMPLOYMENT

Homeschooling parents might be concerned that this information could be unacceptable given that the parent is also the arbiter of achievement. However if one makes a commitment to the truth in the first place you can never be "caught out" i.e. the child him/herself will be proof of the accuracy of your ongoing assessments, and on interview or test their oral and written capabilities can easily be determined. You would do your child no favours by telling lies about their work.

WRITING a C.V.

Encourage your child to write a curriculum vitae for themselves .E.g

Dawn Smith, Address, Phone No.

Yr. 1992

1. Completed all set study in Maths, Geography, Science, Asian social studies, Economics & English.
2. Undertook a part-time course in still life drawing at Burwood T.A.F.E
3. Used the Phillips language course to study Japanese.
4. Competed in local netball.
5. Organised children's church camp.
6. Entered Sydney Morning Herald Essay competition.
7. Worked part time at MacDonalds.
8. Attended aerobics classes.

The most important thing to remember is that this document is being put together for other people to see. Try to make it neat and readable as well as a truthful representation of your child's homeschooling achievments.

OTHER READING

THE QUESTION IS COLLEGE - Herbert Kohl: Random House.
A brilliant, easy to read & wise look at employment and career options aimed at high school students suitable for all.

WHO DOES WHAT WHEN ? Kate Kerman: Holt Assoc.Curriculum planning & record keeping in the Homeschool.

Play is real learning

by Jo-Anne Beirne

A homeschooling mother of my acquaintance recently expressed her concern that her child of 8+ yrs wishes to play all day. Her main question was: When will this child have enough of playing and start learning something?

We all have our own ideas of what the home education of our children will be like. However, for many of us ideas about education are weighed down by our personal perceptions of the learning we experienced ourselves in schools. This type of learning tended to revolve around desks, workbooks, assignments, pencils, paper and teachers (with varying degrees of exasperation, enthusiasm & intensity) who delivered their views on what we should know, when and why. We would do well to remind ourselves that this model is not the only learning model. Then perhaps we can begin to explore other ways of "getting" an education/learning.

For instance each family and child has unique ways of responding to the same learning situation. Two families of my acquaintance were recently sharing some time when a book loved by all was chanced upon, the children of one family were all desperate to take turns reading aloud this much loved tale, the other children of the same age and devotion to the story were intent upon listening to the story rather than reading it out loud. The second group of children wanted to sit pencil in hand drawing the images that the book brought to mind. It has been my observation that in school instead of respecting these individual preferences, the children would have been encouraged to "do" the opposite i.e. the non-readers read and the readers draw in the perverse belief that everybody should be a little good at everything.

Theoretically, we can be very committed to the idea that homeschooling is about freedom without licence; learning through experience; facilitating the learner so that they help themselves to learn and trusting childrens' natural instincts to learn, but the reality can be quite different because of our personal experiences of school over a 10 to 12 year period.

One of the ideas of education that I would like to challenge is that 'playing' is not REAL education. Respected researchers and keen observers strongly support the idea that playing is real, efficient, positive and intense learning.

IS PLAY REAL WORK?

Nancy Wallace is an experienced home educator who says in her new book Child's Work that what we would call playing (i.e with a range of "toys" e.g. blocks, words, dolls, cars, art doodles, concepts, even music) is basically a child's work and should be acknowledged as

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such. Like so many others before her the close observation of her own children over a long period of time (they are now 16 & 12) has shown that things she never even conceived of as the building blocks of learning were actually innovative, creative problem solving and efficient life preparing research.

Closely observe your own children and you will see they ask appropriate questions, organise complex information and test theories continuously through their play - much like real scientists. Nancy Wallace quotes Bruno Bettleheim, a renowned researcher of children's play,- “"Besides being a means of coping with past and present concerns, play is the child's most useful tool for preparing himself for the future and its tasks.....A child at play begins to realise that he need not give up in despair if a block doesn't balance neatly on another block the first time around. Fascinated by the challenge of building a tower, he gradually learns that even if he doesn't succeed immediately, success can be his if he perseveres. He learns not to give up at the first sign of failure, or at the fifth or tenth, and not to turn in dismay to something less difficult but to try, try again." (*Atlantic Monthly*, March 1987- quoted from Wallace: Child's Work)

SCHOOLS & PLAYING

The idea of children wishing to be continually playing is not exclusively a homeschooling problem, contrary to what we might think. In fact, many of the children who are required to stay in schools (by parents and the compulsory attendance law) still manage to use the less than conducive school environment to play a great deal of the time. Not play that they would otherwise choose of course, but still interesting and often entertaining varieties including manipulative and disruptive play e.g the class clowns, jokers and day dreamers.

The activities these children involve themselves in could reasonably be called "play", yet because it is within the "structure" of the classroom where it is presumed that those who attend are "learning" we tend to accept this play as legitimate. In the homeschool the play might take the form of endless dams and mud villages, doodles of make believe theatre productions or doll play, yet it is no less legitimate because it is self-initiated and directed, follows a logical sequence and will reach a satisfactory conclusion in the mind of the child.

We should never be concerned about the play our children pursue as in every case it is a stepping stone to more knowledge, deeper understandings of oneself, one's family, community and the functioning of the world. Children have a great need to extend knowledge and experience boundaries of their own, and the adult world, through safe, personally limited imaginative play and even in school they actively and passively seek out ways to fill these needs.

In the classroom meeting the 'play' needs of individual kids would of course create havoc, in the homeschool it can be simply allowed to pursue its natural course. If you are really interested I suggest you undertake to record some of your children's play, in an unobtrusive manner. It will provide an amazing insight into the depth & breadth of learning that is being developed while children are "playing".

Some of my own records show the usage of quite uncommon 'new' words, thoughts, ideas and information in a testing sense e.g letting the play characters use the unfamiliar language, innovative questions. Play often involves detailed problem solving, very intricate work, patience, incredible persistence and follow through on tasks, enabling investigation and finally consolidation of new information.

It is perhaps fortunate for children that the learning and enjoyment benefits of play are so hard to evaluate and measure and unfortunate for adults because, for this lack of an empirical assessment, we tend to value play so lightly .

PLAY OR WORK?

Research shows us that play is the precursor of other learning, it teaches us the first steps of what we later call the scientific method - investigation, testing, hypothesising, proving (if I throw the biscuit will it fly like a bird or fall like a stone?). Children are basically researching their theories about actions & reactions (plastic mugs don't break but "wow, mum's not keen on me throwing glass!"). From lots of experiences they reach what they feel are reasonable conclusions, that take them ever further along the path of knowledge and understanding. Why should this extremely effective method of learning that children have employed to teach themselves their language & all about the world around them suddenly become redundant at age 5? It seems entirely ridiculous that it does..

There must be individual needs and desires for play. Some really creative people probably have a very great need for more playing time than others of us. Perhaps it could be said that someone like Edison played all his life !! After all don't many people make their living playing? Architects with shapes, fashion designers with fabric, mathematicians with figures, sports people with bats and balls. Of course, they call it "work" distinguishing it from"play" when the distinction is really a matter of societal acceptance. It seems to me that homeschooling children will greatly benefit from the opportunity to pursue their natural inclination to learn and work through play.

LATERAL THINKING DEVELOPED THROUGH CREATIVE PLAY

S. M..H. p.16 October 8th 1991 COMING, READY OR NOT, WHEN SHOULD CHILDREN START SCHOOL ?

Dr Simon Clarke, a consultant pediatrician at Westmead Hospital, who deals with behavioural and learning problems, believes that parents who send their children to school as early as possible are being driven by their own ego rather than concern for their children's welfare. "We should be a more mature society which protects our young rather than kicking them out of the nest too soon," said Dr Clarke. "Parents want to say their children are doing well even though they are very young. But doing well' is an adult judgement." "Children actually develop their confidence and ability for lateral thinking through creative play. They will never develop their full potential if they spend their school lives simply struggling to keep up with their school peers."

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Leistico, A.(1990) I Learn Better by Teaching Myself Home Education Press. WA, U.S.A

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Taking a child out of school
Setting up your own Curriculum

BOTH PARTIES MUST AGREE

Past experience has shown that it is very important that both the parent and child are keen on the idea of homeschooling. It is extremely hard to home educate a child who wants to be in school. It does not matter how strong and determined the parent, it ends up being a very unhappy situation.

In America where parents have often written about the experience of taking their children out of school in G.W.S., Home Education Magazine etc., there is consensus that it may take a child a good while to settle down to homeschooling (in fact even as many years as s/he has been in the school system). The feeling is that the education children receive in school is conducted in a specific manner, with special criteria and expectations based around an authoritative, competitve, and non-interactive, tabula rasa approach where activities/learning are mostly dished out rather than self motivated.

YOUR ROLE

Mothers may not want to take on this "school-type role" in the homeschool and in this case the children can find the independence, need to be self-motivated and the freedom quite daunting. Indeed, they may have the misconception that they are not'learning' anything unless they are filling in worksheets, writing spelling lists etc. They may also have a deep-seated (though unreal) fear of falling behind their school peers. For example homeschooled children are often asked by schooled children "But how do you learn anything at home, won't you be a dummy?" - because school children (and often society in general) assumes that education only happens in the building marked "school". Thus homeschooling for the previously schooled child can be a frustrating and scary experience that requires a lot of trust on their part. It is a phenomenon that must be adjusted to slowly and accommodated broadly, as the unease can show up in many ways.

PATH ONE

To some people home education is 'school at home' and to undertake that path they usually consult and use standard school textbooks and methods. Resources to facilitate 'school at home' are plentiful.The family is usually able to access the books their child was using at school, can and will obtain advice from teachers and will be able to attend to the texts and subject topics in the order and at the pace they find most suitable for the homeschool teacher and child. There are set curricula available to pursue this approach. In this manner the parent can confidently feel that the child is progressing, often in leaps and bounds because of the one to one attention they are receiving.

PATH TWO

Some people who decide to home educate don't want homeschooling to be 'school' at home. They do not wish to follow timetables, set or complete worksheets and exercises, tick, cross, or have their children sit at desks for any period of time. In this case I advise parents to give deep thought to exactly

what path of education they wish their child to explore. I feel that consultation with the child who is able and aware of their learning needs is a really important starting point.

Some of the reasons that parents remove children from schools include inadequate teaching, bad facilities, large class sizes, discrimination, slow or negative educational progress, unfair and bad behaviour, unhappiness, the peer group , etc. Whatever the reasons for the withdrawal of your child from school ,your home education programme can be a new beginning for you and your child redressing the perceived wrongs of the past and forming the hopeful basis of your new learning journey.

PHILOSOPHY

An important first step is to think about, and write down, in a simple meaningful way all the educational, spiritual, social, moral, emotional and other reasons why you wish to homeschool..

You should use your philosophy as a focus for your homeschooling and will help you set up a curriculum that really works for you. When you have decided that you want your child's education to be more/less God centred, more/less child centred; more/less peer dominated; more/less practical skills based; concentrate more/less on the basics; allow more/less time for freedom; move forward faster or approach things at a more leisurely pace; be more/less artistic, and more/less musical then you will have a much better idea of how to facilitate these decisions.

PLANNING

Consider the main subject areas and decide where you want to go in each of those areas. There is no formula for homeschooling it is a very personal matter and as such you alone can decide what is best for you and your family. (Obviously you can and should consult texts, helpful friends, etc - but the decisions are ultimately your own). No committed and caring homeschool parent should feel or be made to feel that they are being forced to do anything with which they are unhappy.

The amount of preparation and paperwork you will have to compile will be determined by a combination of many different factors including possibly the age of the child and your own inclinations to paperwork.

It is worth mentioning here that the paperwork seems overwhelming when it has never been done before but need not be so. Consultation with other homeschoolers and support groups will really help you deal with the 'necessities' and eliminate the 'extras'. Programming & paperwork seem to become much less relevant the more experienced you become, because you are interracting with only a few children on a very close level and you are also observing all the learning that they are doing out of "school" hours so you become very aware of where they are "now" and where they want/will be going next.

WHAT TO TEACH

Your decision on "what to teach" should reflect a combination of

1. What you feel is essential that the child know, (either intuitively, idealistically, based on some set model or as recommended by a government body- these goals aren't always mutually exclusive),

2. What either or both of you want to pursue and some space for the interest led learning that will be generated by the mere fact that you are now active learners intimately involved in the ebb and flow of the learning process.

The following is only a sample NOT the answer. You must find your own answers !!

YR 3 TERM 1

English:

My child will read to me daily from a book of their own choice and I will be reading the 'Little House on the Prairie' series to him over the next term. We will be exploring the Hilaire Belloc poems in the book 'Cautionary Tales'. [Includes oral language development, comprehension, reading, writing, drawing, integration with social studies] We will discuss all work as necessary and follow up any topics that come to our attention, or need to be explained as a result of our reading. We will use our own and library books for research and reference. We will be using the A.B.C. programme B.T.N. as appropriate.

My child does not like to hand write or compose stories at the moment so we will concentrate on the development and importance of oral language and writing will be kept to a minimum. However, as writing is a practical and useful skill we will approach writing in the following forms: word puzzles; shopping and other lists; recipe writing; thank-you notes; penfriends; birthday & other cards. Spelling and punctuation will be part of our ongoing reading commitment and covered in conjunction with all other subjects. Mention should also be made of audio, video, written, library and people resources that you plan to use.

Another example: **YR 6 TERM 1**

SOCIAL STUDIES

My child has a great interest in her immediate community as well as in the world and we plan to use our social studies topics as the basis for our English programme
(incl. reading, writing, handwriting, listening, speaking, research skills etc.)
The three definite topics we intend to cover are -

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1. Our Local Area. - To understand the historical & geographical reasons for development of our area, to find out about our local government, to increase our knowledge of local resources, to consider the options for the future in the development of our district.
2. Vikings - to develop an awareness of an ancient culture, to consider the Vikings' effect on international history and language, to expand our geographical knowledge.
3. Australian explorers- to study the social, political and historical reasons for their exploration, to understand and investigate our cultural heritage, to learn more about the history and geography of our country.

Of course, the language component could include activities such as preparing a talk on the Vikings and Vinland, visiting the Mitchell library to read the Blaxland, Wentworth & Lawson diaries, talking to people at the local council and historical society. Investigating, listening, planning, questioning, recounting, explaining, describing, exploring issues. These are all the things that we Homeschoolers do every day - but they sound so much better when written this way !

HOW TO START ?

Try to choose topics that you and your child really WANT to know about. If interest level is high neither children nor adults have to be motivated or bribed to learn. For instance, if you really want to learn calligraphy,typing, geology you will be anxious to attend the classes, practise and succeed. Every subject and topic is a jumping off point for somewhere else! For instance a mathematical child who hates to read may well be interested in you reading problems from the books Amazing Mazes (R. Heimann) Atlas Explorer & Mastering Maps (Jacaranda) aloud to or with them. In fact, they may then decide to sit down and read these books themselves at a later date, but then again they may not. (this is not a problem and will be covered in another issue). An interest in model aeroplanes can lead to the history of air flight, biographies of famous designers, maths and physics.

METHODS

(a)Projects, reading, writing & bookwork.

A schooled child will be very used to sitting at desks and being given work to do and unless the child has been specifically rebelling against that type of teaching and learning you will probably find that you will do a certain amount of this sort of teaching. This is possibly because we parents have rarely been privileged to see how real learning and gifted teachers work. In this model the motivation and understanding of the learner is trusted- i.e no one checks to see if you know the information - the learning is the learners delight and own responsibility.

(b) Purposeful learning

Try to make sure that your learning has a purpose. Doing schoolwork merely to accumulate pieces of paper to "show inspectors" is a sad and unnecessary way to homeschool. If you are studying ancient cultures you should set yourself the task of finding out exactly what you want to know about them, not what you think some authority thinks you should know. Find solutions to questions, don't just make a pretty or arty collection of information e.g. If you are interested in the Aztecs you may choose to consider their connection to chocolate, their amazing ceremonial clothes or their preoccupation with gold, instead of the normal questions such as where did the Aztecs live? etc. Who is to say that personally interesting questions are not just as likely to inspire new learning?

Time is not so much of the essence when homeschooling so it is easy to drag subjects on and on losing interest in the research and ultimately letting boredom set in, when really the learning should be a voyage of discovery. So try to remember that it is not always a matter of finishing the project but very important to enjoy the learning.

(c) Try the experiential /practical approach

Everyone learns best by doing. From drawing and experimenting to making music. A child who has been burnt out by school may need (or really want) to deal with their learning on a very practical level.. They may want to cook, or do tapestries or dig in the garden or play music or learn to weave and spin. They may be happy to spend hours building model cars or painting or playing lego and dolls. The satisfaction of working with one's hands can be very healing and a positive introduction to a multitude of other life/learning skills.

(d) Out and About

Many children who have been in school can really benefit from seeing "who, does what, where?", actually getting into the learning market place to see why all this education business is so important. Visits to building sites, museums, theatres , parks, workshops, the zoo etc. inject reality, enthusiasm and energy into learning. Being inspired by an exhibition of old furniture at the museum can result in a flurry of activity from constructing a chair from dead gum branches, exploration of tools and how to use them, visits to antique & furniture shops, intense observation of furniture styles, 17th & 18th century history and art, discussion, drawing etc. The 'hands-on' or 'eyes- on' approach does not have to result in a massive interest or undertaking. The commitment in time may be as small as the child's interest level desires, but it is still a powerful way to initiate a love of learning.

We must try to remember that real learning is not the end result of being MADE to study something that someone has set for us (How much history or calculus do you remember?) but mastering and pursuing to a logical conclusion those things we want to learn ourselves.

OTHER READING

G.W.S Holt Associates 2269
Mass. ave. Cambridge 02140
Home Education Magazine
Home Educ. WA 98855
HOMESCHOOL BURNOUT-
Dr. R & D Moore WA
HOW CHILDREN LEARN,
LEARNING ALL THE
TIME.WHY CHILDREN FAIL.
John Holt- Penguin Press-&
Addison Wesley N.Y.)

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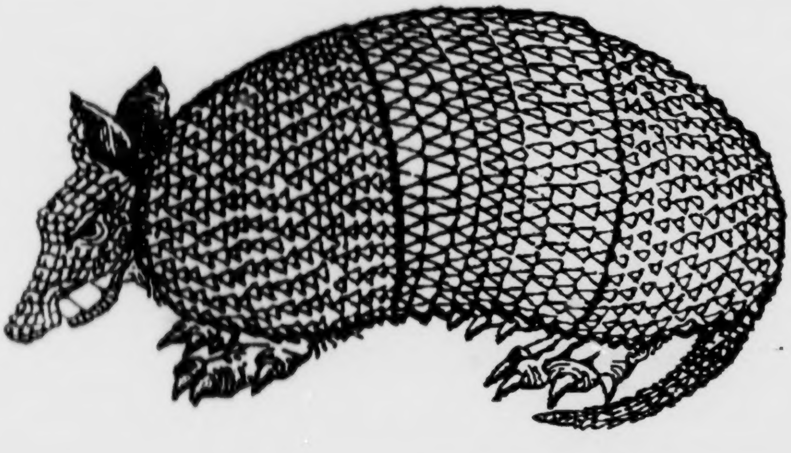
A little about the homeschoolers I know:
1. We spring from all manner of backgrounds.
2. We range the full-gamut of socioeconomic groups.
3. We are of many varied religions and beliefs.
4. We hold true to many different philosophies of education.
5. We homeschool in a myriad of different ways.
6. We homeschool for many different reasons.

However, despite our differences, we are caring parents committed to the spiritual, educational, moral, psychological, physical and social welfare of our children.



EDITORIAL

by Jo-Anne Beirne

This issue of the AHJ is dominated by legislative concerns in Vic, W.A. & Queensland. While some of you may consider these issues a little boring, I feel that it is very important to have a regular, written record of political and administrative changes in each state of Australia. Despite the fact that education administration was given to the states as individuals at Federation, we are all citizens of the same country and erosion of the rights of any one group of people/ homeschoolers affects us all. Also knowledge of all laws allows freedom of movement between states.

I am also a strong believer in not reinventing the wheel. So while each state has its own peculiarities which require the specific attention and advice of local support groups there are broader political issues that apply to all of us throughout the country. It is a shame to have to ferret out this information over and over again for ourselves. All of us need to know how to lobby politicians to protect our interests in many fields, as well as education. It seems to me this form of political self-education is the sort of thing that homeschoolers undertake in so many other fields every day of their homeschooling careers.

So for what good it does I have tried to incorporate some of what we learned in the process of changing the N.S.W legislation and Departmental attitudes in a piece called An overview -Victorian legislation. Perhaps when you read this piece you will incorporate a small piece of the information gained into your own thoughts so that, if, or when, a battle over legislation arises again or in your state you will be better prepared to fight the good and efficient fight. I have received a good deal of positive feedback on the piece so I hope a little step has been taken . Also there is much reason to be hopeful in Victoria as Don Haywood, the Shadow Minister for Education has promised to do his utmost to defeat the legislation (in the Upper House the Liberals have a majority and this should easily be achieved) and maintain the staus quo should he get into power at the next election. Most people will be aware that W.A. and Victoria face elections inside the next twelve months and Queensland not long after that. Happy homeschooling !

THE VICTORIAN LEGISLATION -

An Overview by Jo-Anne Beirne

The Victorian parliament presently has before it a bill called the Education (Out of School Education) Act 1991. This Act aims to amend the Education Act of 1958.

It is the feeling of a broad range of homeschoolers that all Victorian families should protest against the proposed Legislation changes in the strongest possible terms to their local member whether s/he be Liberal or Labor. The beauty of the 1958 Act was that families were not required to be registered but rather, if challenged, they were required to prove in a court of law that they were providing regular and efficient education for their children - an easy thing to prove for a competent and committed homeschooling parent.

It has been widely stated that the proposed Victorian legislation is based on the draconian legislation passed by the then Labor government in N.S.W in March 1987 (and since March 1990 no longer in existence). This of course is possible, though not very likely, as in reality inter-state contact between education departments is almost nil even in the areas of prosecution and the sharing of information, resources and materials. People shouldn't forget that despite the geographical closeness of the 8 Australian states and territories we all have different education legislation, standards and qualifying exams and can agree on hardly anything at a national level. Education in Australia is highly politicised and even the application of expenditure is very much dependent on State by State political, educational philosophies.

At a Federal and State level the Labor Party is known to have a bias against the option of homeschooling except under special circumstances. John Hewson has recently affirmed the Liberal Party's support for homeschooling "under reasonable conditions". The Democrat party is supportive of homeschooling. (An ex Federal Democrat Michael Macklin wrote a book titled 'When Schools are Gone'.)

CONSPIRACY

Homeschoolers are also, sometimes legitimately, concerned about political, bureaucratic and even inter-homeschooling conspiracy theories. The idea that "they are out to get us" is shared by Christians and alternative lifestylers, with some Christian groups even postulating that others have "done deals" with the government to enable the passing of bad legislation. I do not believe this to be the case and it is my belief that a commitment to truth should not be lost just because there is legislation to be fought as it wastes too much precious time.

Perhaps because we were all brought up to be a little frightened of authority in general and because we tend to have little to do with them in general we can get concerned that "they are against us". But looking at it from the other side, to your average administrator, home educators do "look" and "sound" different. It is pretty weird, the department could well contend, to be part of a tiny percentage of the population and educate your kids yourself when there are perfectly good free schools just waiting to be used. One administrator I dealt with was surprised when I turned up to a meeting in a dress instead of looking like a hippie, another felt sure I kept my kids locked up, away from the real world. In fact it is perhaps a little like the way we look at Muslims or bikies or even both ends of the homeschooling spectrum (Greenies & fundamentalist Christians) with suspicion bred of a lack of knowledge and understanding.

When we first had the change of legislation problem in N.S.W. I subscribed to the 'conspiracy' theory i.e. that the politicians and Education Department were out to get us because we are different. Interestingly enough time has shown that bureaucrats who may hate you under a Labor government can be very reasonable and tolerant under a Liberal government. (Political policy determines bureaucratic behaviour). Over time I started to become a little informed about the legislative and political process and I found out that the removal of the right to attend a court of Law to have a decision arbitrated (rather than just by the Minister as this Educ. Act proposes) has been removed regularly in legislation (not just Education) in all states of Australia over the past ten years and it is a continuing trend. Actually a conspiracy against the population in general rather than one group of people in particular.

So, while acknowledging the possibility, we ought not waste too much time on conspiracy theories, but rather emphasise the POLITICAL side of the problem. Bureaucrats have their jobs for life, politicians on the other hand must be responsive to the mood of the electorate and they are in charge of moderating and controlling the bureaucrats. Politicians are the set of people who can put this legislation in the trash where it belongs and they will do that if they are well enough motivated to do so.

REACTING

After six years of interaction with the Education bureaucracy (in N.S.W mainly but also in W.A. and Qld) and the way they think and function I would like to propose an alternative theory - which is that in general and when convinced administrators are open to significant change and do see the benefits of homeschooling. However, initially they tend to act 'reactively' like administrators (and many others in the population) everywhere. It seems to me that when we have a perceived problem in our society to-day we often don't deal with the basic cause of the problem but rather throw a 'rule/piece of legislation' at it e.g increased deaths on the roads - wear seatbelts, use speed cameras; smoking causes cancer - ban sales to 18 year olds, put a warning on the packet etc. Being 'reactive' like this has had some very successful results but it tends to make the bureaucrats (and us) do the same with everything e.g. a child drowns or dies while riding a pushbike - the media cries why don't they teach these things in school?

After discussion with many people on the issue, it is my feeling that the Victorian Education department bureaucrats could have become reactive about homeschooling for at least some of the following reasons:

1. A perceived ongoing problem with a religious group called the Children of God.
2. A significant truancy problem, with no effective legislative muscle to solve it, as they see it.
3. The loss of a couple of court cases and actions before the Equal Opportunity Commissioner and the Croydon Baptist Academy case that was so well won in 1991.

We would all agree that it is an appalling comment on our democracy that as a reaction to losses in court the bureaucracy spurs the government to go out and change the legislation to ensure they win next time. But it is typical in all states, for all parties and for all types of legislation, and in the main people affected by such changes rarely even know it is happening because they are just so busy running their own lives.

USING THE BIG GUN

Rather than attempt some negotiation situation the education department officials figure they can solve all the problems with the really big gun - legislation. You see, they have long memories and they don't like to be made to look foolish either through not being able to adequately prosecute the 'wrong- doers' (as they see them) or, in the media (truancy) or in the courts. So after some frustrations comes the time when the department people write down their lists of changes, to shore up all the perceived holes in the present legislation (as they see it) and after meetings with the Minister, much work and many inter-departmental drafts they have their new set of invincible rules, written up by the Parliamentary Draftsman, and presented to Parliament by the Minister. In the normal situation the Bill is read, debated, amended, voted on and becomes an Act.

CONSULTATION

There is an important lesson to be learned here i.e. that the homeschoolers who are prepared to stand up and be counted in a public sense should always have a person/committee that maintains constant contact with the Education Department and the Minister's office so that neither legislation nor guidelines can be changed without input from homeschoolers. In W.A. and N.S.W., for example, the law requires that special interest groups be consulted before any changes are made to an Act. This is of course not always possible for those people who believe that God is their authority for homeschooling and will not integrate with authorities. While I fully support this view of homeschooling, it can tend to leave you somewhat voiceless when change is about to happen and awfully busy after it does.

OBJECTIONS TO THE BILL

1.The removal of the right to access to a court of law to prove regular and efficient instruction and the implication that home educators must have a certificate under section 53F.

2. The powers that the department has assumed for summoning officers relating to actions towards and proceedings against any person without a certificate under 53D (2) (c)& 53E (2) (a), (b) & (4).

3. For those with no objection to certification the objectionable sections are 53 H (b), 53 I, 53J & 53 K.

POLITICS

You may be aware that the way our government/party system works in Australia is on the consensus approach so it doesn't really matter if your Labor member knows you hate the legislation (though do please tell her/him) because they have to vote on party lines. In N.S.W we even had a Labor Minister who had been homeschooled himself and he had to stand up and repudiate all the good things that the Liberal/National party and Independent members said about Home Education. On the other hand the Liberal/National and Independent members, if well informed, can do many things (going from our experience) including:

1. They can really slow up the passing of the Bill, allowing time for you to get more people to lobby against it.

2. They can propose amendments and have the legislation changed.

3. They can ask for it to be sent to committee, which creates more public discussion.

4. As they have the numbers in the Upper House(Legislative Council) they can of course stymie the bill altogether, if they want.

The politicians, Labor, Liberal and Democrat can be useful not only because they are responsive to the electorate, especially when there is a politically volatile situation as in Victoria, but also because if the fight is well coordinated their parliamentary researchers can keep a unified home education lobby group informed at every stage. Support group leaders shouldn't hesitate to ring them - you pay enough to have them serve you. But, try always to be logical and rational and easy to deal with. Remember that while the Education Minister may be presenting the Bill it was written by the bureaucrats who saw some loopholes they wanted to clean up. I Legislation isn't always the Minister's baby s/he is just often left holding the dirty nappy.

BAD AND GOOD LEGISLATION

It could easily be argued that presently Victoria and the A.C.T have the best education legislation in Australia- in that parents have only to prove regular and efficient instruction before a court of law and are not subject to any other requirements.

It has been said on the other hand that N.S.W has one of the worst Education Acts where the following requirements exist

1. Registration with specific requirements under the Minister OR
2. Certification under a Conscientious Objection option with specific requirements OR
3. Use of the A.C.E program (some A.C. E families do neither of 1 or 2).

However under the "bad" N.S.W. Education Reform Act 1990, there has been a large increase in (a) registration applications (from 183 to about 450 in 1991), (b) conscientious objection applications and (c) families using the A.C.E program. Why? Because despite the major flaw, of removal of access to a court of law, (which will always be lobbied against as unacceptable)there have been major changes in the perception of homeschoolers as people and educators.

Homeschoolers had to take such a large part in lobbying against the legislation that the authorities came to know that we were competent, committed, caring parents who only wanted the very best for our children. They know us and even admire us. As a result the range of acceptable (to Education /Board of Studies officials) programs has increased enormously (from Bob Jones and A.C.E to "unschooling" or Steiner based programs). Also the range of acceptable methods and evaluations (from very structured to very unstructured) has broadened. Almost without exception there is tolerance, good will, recognition of the rights of parents and great homeschooling.

MANDATORY REGISTRATION / CERTIFICATION CAN WORK WELL

Registration works in N.S.W because the Act is well implemented under the Board of Studies , a body independent from the Education Department and responsible to the Minister. The Board and the Minister consult with and listen to homeschoolers on a regular basis and homeschoolers are usually given a two year registration. Board inspectors are responsive to parent needs giving educational advice and resource information and/or acting in a supportive and advisory role. If we are unhappy with anything, there is a friendly and reasonable interaction at this level, then there is the further option of the Appeals Tribunal and further than that to the Minister. In the 400+ registrations of 1991 none went the appeals path, far less the prosecution path and a very diverse set of homeschoolers were seen.

For some few politicians and bureaucrats the idea of registration or certification is one that fulfils their desire to have a "book" to throw at those people that are educationally abusing their children. But we have found that for the great majority of administrators and homeschoolers registration works fairly and well.

DON'T BE A VICTIM, BE AN ACTIVIST

If the legislation in Victoria is passed as it is written in the Bill it could very well happen that nothing will change from the way it is now or that in fact it could get a lot better depending on the amount of time and energy people are prepared to put in with Education Department officials in the area of negotiation. If you believe in what you are doing from the type of learning achieved to the amount of paperwork maintained you must and can argue in its defence, and stay informed to support others to do the same.

53F (2) (a)

Many people have told me they are concerned with the replacement of the old definition of instruction as "regular" and "efficient" with the wording in Division 1A 53F (2) (a) *"the instruction the child will receive is comprehensive and balanced and in the subjects which children of comparable age, ability and maturity would ordinarily undertake in a state school:*

What does regular mean? Usually it means that the child is educated on every day that school is in.

What does efficient mean? Usually that the child is receiving instruction in all subjects as his schooled compatriots and that there is no emphasis on one particular subject to the detriment of the others.

What does comprehensive mean? Large in scope and broadin content.

What does balanced mean? To be in proportion.

All of these definitions are open to interpretation and by Law are not allowed to be applied in a way so as to deny a citizen natural justice. Why define instructions at all ? Education is very important to our society and an enormous number of academics spend a huge amount of time weighing up what is important to know, when and why for children. Whether they are exactly correct is debatable. Nonetheless society supports their decisions and implements them in schools. Because so much money, time and expertise is devoted to education theory and practice, administrators feel that they have basic standards that work and should be generally acceptable to all, including homeschoolers. 53F (2) (a) is a very open-minded attempt to define in one sentence these well-researched "ideals".

It seems to me that all homeschoolers provide an education for their children that can easily be defined by this sentence and that the wording is well thought out in that it allows for comparison with children of COMPARABLE age, ability and maturity. This allows for children with special learning needs whether they be bright or developmentally delayed and while it is specific re the learning of "school" subjects it makes no comment as to the content, scope or sequence within the broad subject headings.

Home educators want the very best for their children in all areas and they provide their children with a learning environment that is much more broad and comprehensive than is ever possible in schools and very well balanced, e.g. there is no way that a family would spend a huge proportion of their time on just Maths, science or macrame etc. What education authorities tend to forget is that as homeschoolers we don't teach our children well because of rules and regulations and equivalency to their school compatriots, we teach them because we love, care and want the best for them - in fact a comprehensive and balanced education superior to that received in any school.

53I, 53J & 53K

For homeschoolers who have always accepted certification, even though it wasn't actually required, sections 53I, 53J & 53K should cause a great deal of concern and be objected to in the strongest possible terms. In 53I (a) and (c) the powers given to the Chief General Manager's representatives are equivalent to those in a police state. While they might not be used in an appalling manner they have the potential to be misused by zealous officials who are philosophically opposed to homeschooling.

53K states that Chief General Manager may cancel the Certificate *"The terms and conditions of the certificate have not been complied with"* or *"any lawful direction of his or her representative have not been complied with"* obviously there are checks and balances in the Appeals process under the Act and possibly under the Equal Opportunities legislation and we must assume that justice will be done because obviously biased officials would constantly be before the Appeals process. Nonetheless your elected representatives should easily understand a natural fear (especially if you put them in your place) that this type of discriminatory regulation should not be in existence at all. I very much doubt that

schools can be treated in such a way and therefore why should homeschoolers have more stringent rules applied to them than institutions answerable to the public and funded from the public purse?

WORST CASE SCENARIOS

I have always been strongly critical of those people who put forward the possible sexual, social or educational abuse of homeschooled children as the reason for the policing of homeschooling. Obviously abuse does not only happen between 9 and 3 and indeed happens in schools anyway. It is my strong belief that homeschooling, or in fact schools (with a 16% functional illiteracy rate they would be in BIG trouble), should never be judged on a worst case scenario basis.

That being said, I do believe the state (we, the citizens) has a legitimate right to demand that children be educated. There is an enormous long term social and economic cost of an uneducated population that cannot be underestimated. So while I whole heartedly respect and support the democratic rights of all those people who feel that the state has no concern with the education of their children, I do strongly sympathise with the state in terms of required access to a guaranteed education for all children. Obviously, the education aspect is well covered when parents use high-quality educational curricula.

While you and I see heaps of normal, responsible, caring, intelligent homeschool parents; education inspectors and welfare officers see some truly sad cases of neglect from people with severe psychiatric disturbances to others with severe drug problems who keep their children home and do not educate them. The fact is that because education administrators often do not interact with normal homeschoolers as regularly as the 'bad' cases they tend to be specifically concerned about the plight of children at home that reflects those bad cases they have seen. Neither bureaucrats nor politicians will see the hundreds of committed parents giving high quality education to their precious children, unless we show them.

GUIDELINES AND REGULATIONS

Many people are of the impression that asking the Department of Education for guidelines on what they determine as the parameters of education is a good idea because it is then "easy" for a homeschooler to show that they are doing a better job than the schools. This is NOT how guidelines work. Past experience in Qld, W.A. and N.S.W has shown that quite the opposite happens and in fact regulations/guidelines are used to "string-up" homeschoolers in avalanches of paperwork.

"Court-happy" people may say that they want regulations so as to prove that they are being applied unequally in schools and homeschools to the Equal Opportunity Commissioner. However, not all homeschoolers have the time, energy or will to be under the threat of constant litigation. Many homeschoolers base their educational philosophy on the assumption that the way children are taught in schools is just not efficient or good for children and they don't want any sort of regulations or rules that lay down a government's "one right way" in any area of education, especially specific regulations governing goals, objectives, procedures or evaluations of homeschooling.

FEDERAL PROTECTION

One of the biggest problems some people see, with 'The Out of School Certificate', is that the Minister and Administrative Appeals Tribunal (section 53M of the Bill) have the final say. However, it is not widely known that an application may be made to the Supreme Court under the Administrative Decisions Judicial Review Act 1988 which recognises that abuses of Ministerial power can occur and covers such things as " ....a breach of natural justice and the taking of relevant.... (or)......... irrelevant considerations into account in the exercise of a power...". (Section [13955] 5. (1) (a) - (i) and (2) (a) -(f).

THE FIGHT MUST GO ON

Of course if the legislation does get through, the fight will not stop for some people. Some groups will fight one way (please see the next paragraph) and some people will want to set up an ongoing "talkfest/lobby group" with the department to ensure that the regulations are applied in an even handed way that recognises the superior and diverse type of education that homeschoolers give their children.

It is well known that the religious beliefs held by some homeschoolers preclude them from registering with the State for homeschooling. One of these groups is led by Frank Marrett of Werribee. If this legislation does pass Frank intends to use a range of options including the Equal Opportunity legislation and even gaol to continue the fight.

UNITY

It seems to me that all homeschoolers of different philosophies, doctrines and beliefs should be able to support each other's right to home educate because we all share a basic commitment to the importance of the family and personal freedom. It would be a sad situation indeed if people who choose one type of homeschooling educational option deny other people their choice of option. We need to fight as concerned individuals, members of support groups and as a movement reflecting a broad spectrum of society.

THE IDEAL

To have the Education (Out of School Education) Act 1991 totally thrown out and to ensure that powers for welfare officers remain under the Welfare Act .

A FALL BACK POSITION

If the law is to be passed, in the short term, in some form, is there a part you can live with and what are the parts you cannot? Obviously this is going to be an individual choice. Some people, especially those who don't ever intend to register for religious reasons will object mainly to 53D, E, G & 53 I while other parents may have more concerns with 53F, 53I, 53J and 53K. Some families may be willing to accept 53F with a modified 53K, though with 53I and 53J totally removed. (These two sections are almost identical to the 1987 N.S.W legislation but were amended and thus removed from the 1990 Education Reform Act.) Support groups will have copies of exactly how they want the law to read. While the Liberal Party may approve of some form of certification and registration and vote with Labor on that issue they could, with their majority in the Upper House, easily amend or remove the unwanted sections.

THE REALITIES

1. Frank Marrett says that part of the Education (Out of School Education) Act 1992 must be passed because it is the long term intention of the Education Dept. to transfer truancy enforcement to themselves and this is part of what the Act does. However the wording of this Act obviously needs to be changed back to the unthreatening option that is presently part of the Welfare Act. So if this part of the legislation must go through it will require delicate and persistent negotiation to get the relevant bits changed. Ideally all groups can mutually decide on an option with which they are happy and a short logical explanation of why to limit the effect of looking disorganised.

2. The Liberal party has a majority in the Upper house and therefore the legislation cannot be passed if the Liberal party is totally convinced by your submissions- this is the challenge. It is Frank Marrett's opinion however, that the Liberal party want a system of registration and they may well support this option and also that John Hewson's "reasonable conditions" is the same as saying "registration". N.S.W experience does back this assessment up but the only true information is spoken by the person concerned.

THE MEDIA

All forms of the media can be powerful allies or deadly enemies. Anyone who is outspoken or seen as highly radical compared to the norm can be seen as fair game for a T.V. crucifixion. Obviously, homeschoolers can justifably feel highly emotional and yet coldly rational on the issue of the change in legislation. But the Education Department officials, who will be consulted as the 'experts' against you in any interview can look very reasonable if they say something like "If these families are teaching their children well, they have nothing to fear from us." "Comprehensive and balanced education is the goal of schools, why shouldn't homeschoolers be subject to the same rules as everyone else?" " The children of certified homeschoolers will never be regarded as truants and the section regarding summoning officers powers (53E) will never affect them". Handle all with care.

WHAT TO DO

1. Get a copy of the proposed Bill and a copy of the objections from your local support group and read their informed, non emotional objections. As a result write your own comments and detailed objections to
(1) the Education Minister Mr. Pullen
(2) your local member
(3) Don Haywood the Shadow Minister for Education.
2. If possible make an appointment with your local member and go along and introduce yourself as a home educator in their area. In a non emotional way present your objections and ask them to take up the issue and keep you informed.
3. Write letters as an individual but keep in contact with the support groups so you are aware of what is going on. Send them a self addressed stamped envelope for more information or start a phone tree, we all need each other.
4. Try to encourage all homeschoolers to write and be heard, especially those who don't usually write letters.
5. Religious people will pray for strength & wisdom.
6. Try to put differences aside and support the right of all to home educate.
7. Don't give in or run out of energy, "one letter does not a change make", members of support groups have to realise that if you can hold the legislation up for a couple of months they have to be there over that period to get a good result.
8. Know your politicians well in both Houses, by sight as well. Some will be useless for your cause but the friendly ones should be respected and used but still treated gently and not threatened.
9. Whenever the legislation is being discussed have support group members in Parliament- it can make a difference. (The N.S.W. bill was finally passed at 2 a.m.)
10. If the law is passed you can still beat it at the next election especially if you have made the Liberals realise that it could be an election issue.

SOME LEADERS OF SOME LOBBY GROUPS

Alternative Education Resource Group (A.E.R.G)
Peter Petersen 059 665 210; Annette Berryman 03 489 7530 ; Lindy Fergus 03 807 9122
Sue Simpson 03 8897044

Australian Christian Academy & Croydon Baptist Academy George Moran (03) 725 1559

Families Honouring Christ
John Angelico 03 543 5237 Fax 03 544 2328.

The Christian Family School Association
Frank Marrett 03 741 1490 (7 - 10 p.m).

Yarra Valley Hm/schers Karen Williams 059 669063

QUEENSLAND LEGISLATION

An Update by Jo-Anne Beirne

This is part of my most recent letter to the Minister for Education in Qld. As this is a very important issue I am not content to let Qld parents be discriminated against in the area of homeschooling.

"............

LEGISLATION - Philosophically

If legislative changes are required homeschoolers will be prepared to lobby for them. Obviously the main problem for us is that the present legislation, as it is being administered, is discriminatory and unworkable for many families.

You are undoubtedly aware that Australia is a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which says *"Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children."* (Article 26 (3)). The present Queensland legislation denies non-teacher registered Queensland parents this basic right. There is no other state in Australia that treats parents this way. Furthermore you will not find an educational theorist or researcher anywhere in the world who will not substantiate the fact that one to one, or small group tuition, is a highly effective model for education. All of the basic criticisms of homeschooling from a lack of socialization in the real world, to the pursuit of too structured/unstructured programs can be answered with respected research if we have an opportunity to put it before you and the Education Department.

LEGISLATION - Practically

No-one has yet proved to my satisfaction that the Education (General Provisions) Act does indeed need to be changed. I still believe that 58 (2) (a) (ii) could easily be set up to allow non-registered teachers to register for homeschooling dispensation. Robin Sullivan sent me a copy of the Order in Council and, the way it is written, it definitely does not apply to Section 58 (2) (a)(ii). It actually states

"His excellency the Governor, acting........and in pursuance of the provisions of 58 (2) (a) (i) ..." (From the Order in Council at the Executive Building, Brisbane 3.8.89 - Qld. Gov. Gazette no. 146 p. 2993.) i.e. with specific mention of 58 (2) (a) (i).

Some people may say that the Order in Council is meant to provide for BOTH sections i.e. (2) (a) (i) & (2) (a) (ii) however if you read Section 58 (2)(a) it states *" ANY of the following shall be deemed to be a valid reason..."* .
That is, 58 (2) (a) (i) & 58 (2)(a) (ii) are OR propositions and the Order in Council only applies to the first section.

Robin Sullivan answered the problem unsatisfactorily when she wrote "In your letter you refer to section 58 (2)(a) (ii) of the Education (General Provisions) Act 1989. Section 58 (2)(a) (i) states that................prescribed by Order in Council"

I am well aware of Section 58 (2)(a) (i) and what is prescribed for it by the Order in Council. But it is Section 58 (2)(a) (ii) that is in dispute.

Furthermore close reading of Section 78 reveals *"The Governor in Council may make regulations not inconsistent with this Act for or in respect to - (j) all matters required or permitted by this Act........... "*

So if the Governor in Council has NOT made a regulation in respect of Section 58 (2) (a) (ii) then obviously the Minister is able to make a decision CONSISTENT with the intention of the Act and thus the intention of Section 58 (2) (a) (ii) which states "in a range of subjects acceptable to the Minister, in some other manner which, in the opinion of the Minister, is regular and efficient."

In Section 58 (2) (a) (ii) there is no mention of REGISTERED TEACHER or ORDER IN COUNCIL (and there is no Order in Council that refers to this section). Indeed we believe Section 58 (2) (a) (ii) provides a statement equivalent to the option that provides for homeschooling in every other State's legislation. It allows that the Minister must decide in cases of dispute about a parent applying regular and efficient instruction. While this is not our ideal for legislation it is workable at present and non-discriminatory with regards to Queensland parents who are not registered teachers who wish to homeschool.

Homeschooling in West Australia

by Jo-Anne Beirne

This is an excerpt from my recent letter to Mrs Kay Hallahan, Minister for Education in W.A.. There are 2 families of whom I am aware, who are presently in dispute with the Department over Home Education in W.A. It is my feeling that the inspectors in question are not against homeschooling per se but just see education in the light of a very 'school type' definition. Fortunately, the law in W.A. specifies 'regular' and 'efficient' and both families being committed and intelligent can easily use their programs, childrens work & diaries to prove regular and efficient.

.... "Some of the main things that the research shows are

1. One to one, or small group tuition, is a highly effective model for education.
2. That an assessment of capacity for, and enjoyment of, socialization among homeschoolers is at least as good as and often better than that recorded for their schooled peers, and is definitely spread over a wider age group of people.
3. That the educational, emotional and social nurturing provided by the family unit, allows homeschooled children to develop skills of self-motivation, initiative and independence.
4. There is no one educational program or method to suit all children. Children have different aptitudes, interests, abilities and learning modes. If we develop an individual approach to learning, that is the characteristic of the homeschool, children are most likely to have positive attitudes towards long term learning.

Unfortunately, it has been our experience, that Education Department administrators generally have only limited access to small numbers of home educating families and rarely have the opportunity to see a broad range of philosophies and different approaches over any length of time. Added to this is that some tend to view the phenomenon of homechooling negatively at the first contact and secondly some educators are philosophically and practically opposed to homeschooling.

Often these adminstrators/educators use the power that they have to try to limit, what they perceive as a dangerous situation, i.e. an increase in parents choosing the option of homeschooling. Fortunately, the foresight of our politicans in enshrining the right to homeschool, in legislation, provides some small protection against any excessive application of restrictive regulations by those who perceive the law allows them this power.

Sometimes, only time will heal the problem and often there is merely a need for negotiation, so that administrators can meet regularly and speak with homeschoolers. This enables them to appreciate that homeschoolers come from a broad range of socioeconomic and educational backgrounds, many are in fact teachers and professionals, and that they have very positive and well thought out reasons for making the homeschooling choice and continuing with it indefinitely.

You are undoubtedly aware that Australia is a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which says "Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children." (Article 26 (3)). Obviously the present W.A. legislation does not deny parents this basic right. However flowing from this one presumes that natural justice should be granted both sides in a dispute. There should be able to be some review of the whole situation, by independent persons, preferably with some homeschooling experience if not sympathies. We believe from past experience, and cases that have gone before the N.S.W. Ombudsman, (the duties and powers of the Ombudsman in W.A. and N.S.W are very similar - according to our legal advice), that it is regarded as a reasonable request to have an alternative inspector/superintendent become involved in a case of dispute. This does not cast any aspersions on either party but merely acknowledges differences in interpretation of the "truth" regarding education thought.

Standing back from the situation I have been able to compare the programs, paperwork, reactions and treatment by W.A. officials of homeschoolers from a broad geographical and philosophical range in W.A. and it is our strong belief that the program, evaluation and interaction with the Department of at least one, if not both, families in dispute would be considered more than satisfactory by other inspectors.

Homeshoolers who choose to become legal never wish to be in an "us" and "them" situation with the Minister and the Department. The law allows for homeschooling quite explicitly, we apply quite openly and yet we are often treated like common criminals and have conditions applied to us that would never be accepted by the school system the best example of this is six monthly visits. So often we are made to feel we are guilty until we are proven innocent, instead of the other way around.

Sure there is the "worst case scenario" of parents possibly abusing their children educationally, but this same "worst case scenario" is also just as possible in the schools where you will be aware that despite the Department's best efforts there are some teachers, classrooms and resources that are not perfect. Homeschooling parents cannot be hauled over the coals and treated like criminals in anticipation of some parent, some time, not educating their children. Just as the Department cannot be held totally responsible for the 16% of children who graduate schools functionally illiterate and innumerate, or the chronic truants.

GENERAL HOMESCHOOLING CONCERNS

Many of our members have voiced the following concerns to me in our discussions regarding the present application of regulations in W.A. and regarding the present cases in dispute, could you please reply to them?

1. Our most important concern is that now this matter has come to a head is there any chance that Departmental officials will apply to have the Legislation altered? And are you aware if the Education Department has any policy with regards to limiting homeschooling and if so why? If any change in the Law is proposed could you undertake to inform us please, as the law requires?

2. Could you please outline the procedure that you and the Department would use in a case where a parent has a legitimate complaint against an inspector's assessment of the homeschool situation? Is there a Homeschooling Review Committee or board ? Does it have any homeschoolers on it ? If one was created could we suggest that it does? Would it be possible to meet you in person and/or address such a committee? I would envisage that our presentation group would be made up of a diverse range of homeschoolers from all the W.A. support groups, Dr. Eamon Murphy from Fremantle and myself representing Homeschoolers Australia.

3. Are the changed Draft Requirements for Homeschoolers completed ? If so can they be distributed among homeschoolers for feedback to your Department?

4. It has been said that the Labor party is philosophically opposed to homeschooling. We wonder if you could confirm for us if it is the intention of your own political party to limit the number of homeschoolers in W.A.? If so, for what reasons?

I would like to emphasise again that we would be delighted to meet with you. A meeting will undoubtedly confirm for you that homeschoolers are not "kooks" or or any other "group" but rather ordinary people who want to do the very best for their children in all areas. Thank you for your attention in this matter and looking forward to your reply.

N.S.W news

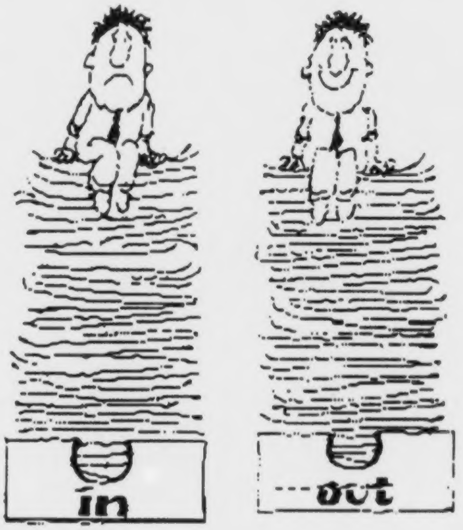
by Jo-Anne Beirne

There are three homeschooling concerns presently before the N.S.W Minister for Education and the Board of Studies these are

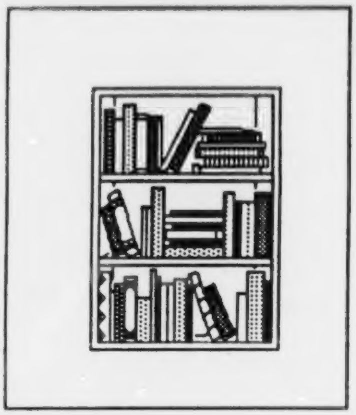
1. Access to the H.S.C at Year 12 level .

2. The issue of the old Education Department files that were kept on us under the 1987 legislation being removed from our Board of Studies files and sent to the archives.

3. Access to Distance Education materials, at a price.



RESOURCE INFORMATION



GETTING CHILDREN'S WORK PUBLISHED

There is a magazine called Aspire that appears monthly that publishes children's work. For more details the telephone number is 07 355 0868

MICROSCOPE FUN

Did you know that there is a Postal Microscopical Club of Australia? It enables members from all parts of Australia to participate in the microscopical sciences- particularly natural history specimens. The club circulates sets of prepared slides together with a comments book to all members to study in their own time. A newsletter Amateur Microscopist is sent to members which includes articles on techniques, history, formulae and letters. The club encourages members to prepare their own slides and send them to other members around Australia. The enthusiasm rubs off onto new members who can then participate in this hobby without fear of isolation. The club accepts members over 11 years. For more details write to PMCA, 28 Valley Rd Hazelbrook 2779.

WHAT IS GOING ON IN SCHOOLS ?

If you are interested to know what the Education Department and Board of Studies in N.S.W specifies as essential coverage for each subject in schools you can get copies of these documents from

*Board of Studies-
K-6 Science & Technology , All subjects for the School Certificate & Higher School Certificate.
Communications Branch Board of Studies Ph 925 8111
or
*Department of School Education
for all other primary syllabuses.
Curriculum Resource Unit - The Shop Ph 808 9444

(Thanks to Neil Mierendorff and Don Haddon for this information)

AUSTRALIAN ACADEMIC TOURS

Dr David Roots runs a very detailed program of short, long and overseas trips from Sydney, Melbourne and Canbera concerned with all sorts of geological and natural history issues. If you wish to get a copy of his program & price list write to 12 Sturdee Lane Elvina Bay 2105.

SCHOOL MAGAZINES

I read on the advertisement that the school magazines were founded in 1916. They sure are a great literary tradition. I remember loving mine and my children love theirs too. They cover reading ages 8-advanced in four levels and come once a month from February to November. The cost is $6/sub & $11 postage. For more details : School Mag. Priv Bag 3 Ryde 2112

EDUCATION EXPO

Many of you will be aware of the Dept. of Education's Education Resource Centers (E.R.C.) These centers are designed to provide the public with access to a large range of educational resources and each unit has it's own particular 'expo' days where private and government publishers, computer distributors and art suppliers gather to present their wares. One is planned for the Emerton E.R.C. soon and the one in Parramatta is also very well equipped. Find out about your local E.R.C. soon.

(Thanks to Donna Gibbs & Rhonda Pritchard for this information.)

PUBLICATIONS

Many of the educational regions (Metropolitan South, North, etc.) have publications committees, that publish materials used or compiled by teachers. Often these are very good and inexpensive resources. If you would like any more information you will find the phone number of your region in the front of the white pages. For the Met. West Publications Committee brochure write c/- Bert Oldfield Public School, Oldfield Rd. Seven Hills Ph. 671 7760.

RESOURCE INFORMATION continued

COUNCIL EXCURSIONS

Recently a group of Blue Mountains homeschoolers attended an informative excursion of the Blue Mountains City Council. Mr Doggett (an ex-council employee) spent his own time to come in and explain to the children levels of government and how the council works to our children. The children learned so much ! They participated in a mock council session and were able to sit in the alderpeople's chairs, don the mayoral robes and act as the Town Clerk. They put and passed various motions and even got thrown out when disorderly- all according to council meeting protocol. The session took over two hours and there was even tea and biscuits after. I would recommend this educational excursion to everyone - so get a group together and ask your local council for details. (This information sent by Sue Cartwright.)

EARTHWATCH

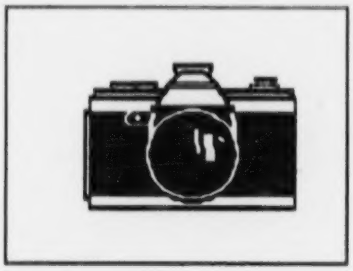
Earthwatch is an organisation that funds scientific field research by placing paying volunteers into the field to work with scientists. You can find out more about the 1992 expeditions by calling Earthwatch on 290 1022. (From the A.N.H magazine.)

PC GLOBE/ MACGLOBE

This educational software takes you on a world tour of 190 countries where you can hear the national anthem of all of them, see the flags, read about any statistic from currency, population, industries and death rates to imports and exports. There is extensive cross referencing and data on each country including three different types of maps and a facility that allows you to determine the distance from any one place on earth to any other.

SCIENTIA CHALLENGE PROGRAM

This is supposed to be for gifted and talented high school students from Yrs 7-10, who are at Yr 10-12 level, but obviously it would suit anyone who is enthusiatic and rich enough (a two day program is $200). There is a broad choice of studies to undertake under the auspices of a number of faculties and highy qualified academics. This is the fourth Christmas break Scientia Challenge program, For more details ring Uni of N.S.W 697 3175



WHY THEY SHOULD BE AT HOME?

A new course incorporating drug education will be mandatory in N.S.W high schools in 1992 and in K-6 from 1993. Ms Graham who is teaching the course at Willoughby Primary School said "Young children are particularly susceptible to any direction you may lead them"

NEW SYLLABUSES

Just to show you that a diversity of subjects is now encouraged in N.S.W it is interesting to read that some of the new syllabuses in '92 include Business Studies, Studies of Religion, Drama, Dance, Korean, Arabic and Turkish (Years 11-12) Aboriginal Studies, Career Education, Engineering Studies, Food Tecnology, Design and Technology and Chinese (Years7-10)

MATHEMATICS

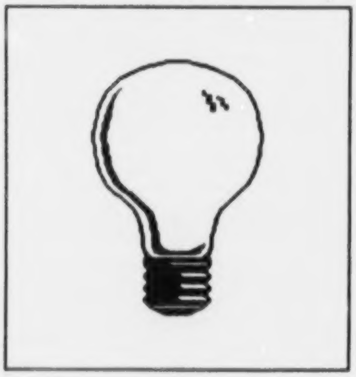
First Aid in Basic Mathematics is a handbook for parents & teachers of children having difficulty with school mathematics. The author Theodore H. MacDonald is highly qualified and experienced. It is available from most bookshops.

SCIENCE QUESTION TIME

Alan Thompson is a homeschooling parent and teacher who has written a software drill-quiz covering 65 Junior Secondary Science Topics (which he teaches) for Apple Computers. It is excellent preparation for H.S.C. Science subjects. If you would like more information contact Alan at P.O. Box 346 Dubbo 2830.

SHAKESPEARE

For those just discovering the joy of Shakespeare."Playing Shakespeare" is a board game of Shakespearean charades- involving players who attempt, through charades, to fill in missing words in famous Shakespearean quotations. Although it is recommended for children 12 years old and over no special knowledge of Shakespeare is necessary. A booklet is included with quickie summaries of all 37 plays. Available from Aristoplay P.O. Box 7529, Ann Arbor, MI 48107-7529. U.S.A



LETTERS

Dear Jo-Anne

Lorna Tonnochy Pimlico Qld
I really feel I can't anonymously send off these envelopes without trying to express my thanks to you. It's taken me years, starting at curiosity, through to commitment to get where I am now, which is ready to begin homeschooling. I first applied in May but persistence has paid off and I now have been assured that approval will be through next month. Without your journal there is no chance that I would have known where to begin, my sincerest thanks. It has been an interesting exercise working "with" the Qld Education Department.

Peter & Lily Nesbitt-Hawes, Central Coast, N.S.W
Here is a list of Home School Dates for 1992 from the Central Coast. We ask families to please give us some notice if they wish to attend on (043) 621473.
1. Saturday 15th February \Long Jetty Park (West) Lots of play equipment, picnic facilities, walk and bike tracks, etc. Meet 11.30am
2. Saturday 23rd May, Lane Cove River Park near zoo and causeway. Meet 12.00am
3. Saturday 15th August Rumbalara Park via Springfield Picnic area/bushwalking.

Susan & Will McAulay, Moss Vale NSW
Thank you for all that work. Loved the cover, attractive and easy to read layout, excellent content, informative, practical, challenging. We have 11 interested families in Moss Vale this year.

Karen Williams, Salisbury VIC
Great Journal! It happened to come just in time to help another family and myself decide what we should do in regards to receiving extra attention from the local officers. The officers want them to home educate in a more structured manner than they wish. It was the article on P.9 - Homeschooling Freedoms, which encouraged us to send letters to those concerned. Glad to read that you are a councillor for Dr Moore's Home Educators International. When I replied to their questions I commented that I felt you were a worthy choice and I hope Australia would get some benefits from the organisation in the near future. The Yarra Valley Homeschool Group has grown with an interest from 7 or so new families.

Ray Dimitroff, Upwey Tas.
Appreciate your efforts, we found the AHJ very informative and inspirational.

Lynn Cherry, Quilpolly
Thank you for the journal. It is just what we need. Thank you for all the advice and support that you gave us when we were starting. We have quite a good little group at Quirindi and we have had excursions to Bayswater Power Station, Glenbawn Dam, Tamworth Airport, where we rode in the Fire engine. We also saw Ginger Meggs presented by the New England Theatre Company. Now to get the children to write about these things!

John Peacock, Tasmania
Many thanks for the copy of your resurrected journal. It is good to see you back in harness again. I particularly liked the piece on homeschooling freedoms. You managed to put my feelings, and I am sure those of many other home educators, so succinctly. Point 3 said that if I don't complain you will assume that there is nothing that I am unhappy about. I am not complaining but I must say that your comment on the legal situation in Tasmania was well below your usual meticulous level and should be amended. The working party consisted of 6 people only. If you are going to mention names you should do the honours all round. Kathleen Carins of A.C.E. travelled furthest and worked hardest of the home educators and deserves a mention, not to say a commendation. The other members of the committee were Kate Shipway, a lecturer from the University of Tasmania; Alistair Holm, who does work for the Education Dept but made it clear that he was there from his own interest and not specifically representing anyone; the chairperson Alison Jacob, who is the person in the Department who has responsibility for home education. Georgie Holderness- Roddam of N.A.G. and myself.

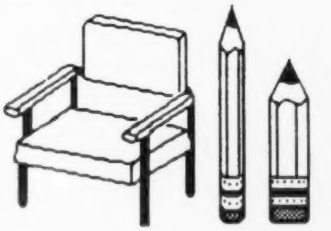
All the home educators concerned (The committee adopted that title to include homeschoolers) were "not very pleased with the results". I certainly am only relatively happy with it as it was drawn up and many home educators in the community have chosen to shun the whole proceeding altogether. After the report was submitted, the Minister met with all the committee except Georgie, who was in England, and Alistair, and

LETTERS

suggested significant alterations with which I do not agree and which considerably undermine the original report and the intent behind it. The report was subsequently amended according to the Minister's desire. Because it is still a confidential document I can't go into detail, but it is not as good an outlook as we had hoped. Beyond all that, it is likely that there will be an election before Christmas and the Liberal shadow minister has stated that he is satisfied with the old system. The Liberals have also come under considerable pressure from the Principal's Association which opposes home education. The situation is not, then, all rosy but we are still battling.

Lynden Jacobi, Whitebridge

I'm feeling more and more comfortable with homeschooling the longer we do it. It has always felt good to have Josh at home but doubts pop up every now and then, usually concerning things like "how can I do all I want with him and still have time for Erin (3 years old) and Sylvie (5 months old) and of course, time for me. I've just finished reading Learning All the Time and am about to start on Teach Your Own by John Holt.



We really started to homeschool Josh when we went travelling last year. It was so easy because I wasn't concerned about teaching him anything knowing that there was enough going on without me doing anything. While in the States I read Teach Your Own and was very impressed and very keen to keep Josh out of school. When we got home 6 months later Josh wanted to go back to the Steiner school so I agreed. His class was too full so we continued with schooling at home but suddenly there was pressure on me to teach him things. I decided to enrol Josh in the Government Correspondence School. This was a big mistake. Josh had gone through a very different system and had done no reading or writing before. It was terrible trying to stick to such a straight program and both of us disliked it. We lasted 6 weeks then dropped out. Josh was still keen to go to school and decided if he still couldn't get into the Steiner school he would like to try the local public school. I was very concerned about how this would go as he would be starting 3rd grade without having done any reading or writing. The Steiner school only introduced letters in 3rd grade. I enrolled Josh at a private tutoring school, Arrendell, in order to teach him the basics of reading and writing.

Going to school was very difficult for him as he had to learn all sorts of things. His not knowing what "rule a margin" meant was just one more sign to the teacher that she was dealing with a very sad case, someone with a severe learning disability. He managed to go for 2 semesters though his self-esteem seemed to me to be plummeting. It was only recently that he said to me "I didn't cry every day.....but I felt like it". What a terrible thing! I'm just so glad he didn't stay there any longer. Two semesters was enough for Josh to realise he really would rather be home schooled and we're all much happier for it. I'm very interested in how you go about educating your kids. Do they have much tuition? You mentioned that one is doing carpentry on Saturdays. Was this arranged with a friend or is it an actual course. Do your kids have much contact with other children and are they children of friends of yours or are they neighbours? How did you first find out about homeschooling? How old are your kids? My questions go on and on. I'm keen to learn as much as I can about all approaches to homeschooling. It's also good to talk to people who are doing it so that I can bounce my ideas off others in a similar situation.

I have found that the more sure I am about our decision not to send Josh to school the less people voice their disagreements but there is still this feeling that I have to justify my actions. Many people see keeping Josh out of school as over protectiveness on my part. I think it is important to protect those you love especially children who are given so little power in our society to protect themselves. The other thing I quite often come up against is the fact that Josh will be different and how is he going to be able to fit in to the real world later on. Little do they know that our family life is just as real and I honestly don't feel it will make such a difference to my children anyway except maybe give them a stronger base to move on from.

Stephen Ward, Sussex Inlet N.S.W

Thank you for the help and encouragement you gave Debbie prior to our homeschooling inspection. We were granted permission to continue for another two years and the visit was very positive, affirming what we had already done as well as confirming our change in drection regarding pioneering our own curriculum. We enjoyed the AHJ and hope it can continue to be published. If we can do anything to contribute to your work in homeschooling please let us know. We are excited and challenged about the years ahead and would like to see more parents given the opportunity to teach their own.

LETTERS

Ian and Rose Tresvaskis, Wairewa VIC
Just to inform you that we will again be having our annual homeschooling weekend from Friday to Monday, Labour Day Weekend March 1992.
We are situated in East Gippsland on the edgce of the State forest, 11km from Nowa Nowa. Wairewa is a small farming valley off the Princes Highway, close to the famous Limestone Caves at Buchan and the beautiful 90 mile beach. Camp Wairewa can be your base for exploring these tourist attractions as well as the opportunity to meet with other homeschooling families in a relaxed, informal, holiday atmosphere. Our homeschooling camp is usually a memorable time of fun, farm and fellowship. Our tentative program is as follows:

HOMESCHOOL CAMP WEEKEND
Friday: Welcome
Saturday: Breakfast, 9.30 a.m trading table, 10.30 a.m. out in the bush by horseback, carriage or on foot. Meet for a picnic lunch at the Pioneer Memorial, 2 p.m. Team Games, 6 p.m. Casserole Tea, & 7.30 p.m. Bush Dance.
Sunday: Breakfast, 9.30 a.m Worship, 10.30 a.m. Pioneer Skills Demonstration, 12.30 lunch, 2 p.m cricket match/pony rides/Trip to Mt Nowa Nowa 6 p.m. Tea 7.30 Concert.

Barry and Roz Hancock, Riverstone N.S.W
In 1991 we started the North West Sydney Homeschool Support Group especially but not exclusively for A.C.E. homeschoolers. The aim of our group is to provide prayer support, encouragement and practical help. We hope to particularly meet the needs of Mums who have little opportunity for fellowship with other Mums. Please contact us on 02 627 1308 if you wish to know more details.

Sandra and Barry Turner, Burrinjuck N.S.W
We were delighted to receive the AHJ. We want you to know that we appreciate the time, energy and effort it took you (and is going to take you) to produce this quality and much needed forum for homeschooling families. We both read the journal from cover to cover.Our interview with David Evans went really well and we were granted a one year registration. I am happy with the programme I have put together for 1992, with the help of a teaching friend, but I am convinced that a non-pressure approach to education is the best approach. I admit that I am hoping that future issues of the AHJ will inject me with the encouragement and confidence I need, as every little bit helps!

Rosa Geenen, Blaxland N.S.W
In 1991 I organised a music/art group for the Lower Blue Mountains. We had a fulfilling and enjoyable year. We covered international, Australian bush and Aboriginal music. We had a go at a didgeridoo and the older children learnt recorder. We had an end of year concert where the children played music, performed in a play, did dance and gymnastics routines and sang. Everyone participated in our sing-a-longs and about 40 people attended the event. This year we would love to see more participants and our first day will be Feb 3rd. On March 2nd we will have a music specialist to perform a show for us. A small fee is charged for participation. If you are interested please contact me on 047 396403.

Kathy Boles, Emu Park Queensland
HOME EDUCATION GATHERING
Anyone interested in a Home Education Gathering on the weekend of 5-8 June near Emu Park, Queensland please write to Kathy Boles, 2 Richard St, Emu Park, 4702 and send a self-adressed stamped envelope for information and to contribute ideas. We need to know approximate numbers by mid-April to decide if it is viable. Accomodation is in a church camp close to the each 3km from Emu Park, with a kitchen-dining-meeting building and a separate sleeping quarters building. Emu Park is a small seaside town 45km east of Rockhampton and about 700km north of Brisbane. Cost $4 per person per night or $12 per family per night or $2 per day visitor. Babies and toddlers no charge. Activities will only be as organised as people want.

HOMESCHOOL PRE-SCHOOL

by Marcelle Foundling

The night before AHJ 31 arrived I was deep in meditation, praying for guidance as to what was the best option for my children's educational future. I have always been enthusiastic about unschooling but having my children home seven days a week for the past five months is something I am not used to (as I have been studying part-time for the last six years). Bede (18 months) had been teething and whinging constantly for a few days.

I was comforting him as I sat on the floor amidst a mountain of toys when Rory (4 1/2 years, the "is he going to school next year?"' age) decided to jump on my back as he often does as soon as I pay Bede any attention. "I can't handle this", I thought to myself and reached for the phone to call a local Community School I had been meaning to have a look at for sometime. They said come down and have a look anytime and I had the kids dressed and on the doorstep within half an hour. The school was lovely (as far as schools go) and had all the things I would like for in an educational establishment loose structure, mixed age classes, free time periods for the children, parental involvement, self paced teaching, etc. One of the teachers had even homeschooled herself for a while so understood my concerns and almost convinced me this school was a better option. Rory loved playing in the cubby house and sandpit and has told me he would love to go there.

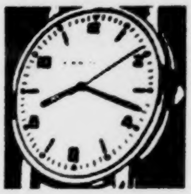
As impressive as it was, I still have not filled out the application form .... Why? Maybe it's when they said they follow the Education Department Curriculum I could not help but feel that this was just a nicer way of getting the same old information in. I have been watching Rory more closely over the last week to compare what he is doing at home with what he would be doing at school, even an alternative school. The next day he pulled out one of his dinosaur sticker cards and began painting each little section a different colour. After twenty minutes of concentrated work he announced that he wanted to make this really good 'just like those kids at the school had worked for a long time on their sandpit' (the children had built a great network of roads, tunnels and castles). He was at it for an hour and produced a beautiful picture. 'Ah! Nothing like the influence of the school environment to bring out the best in a child!', some would say. The irony is, I thought afterwards, that if he were at school he would not be given enough time to complete this task and the inspiration would probably take him at morning tea or mathematics time anyway.

Yesterday I was writing when Rory asked me to write his name at the top of a page so he could copy it. I was delighted to witness his first attempts at writing and he finished up filling five pages of people's names. Again it occurred to me that if he were at school he would not be allowed to use a thick red marker pen and write the letters in any size or position he liked as I had allowed him to. He would learn to write at school but I am sure his first experience of writing would not be any fun with the regulation pencil tracing dotted outlines of 'cat' and 'dog' along a straight line (I have seen the Pre-Writing workbooks!). Most saddening to me would be that I could not imagine him mowing his father down at the door to show off such unoriginal efforts.

There seem to be more and more instances I notice now of how Rory would be better off away from school. I needed to have a look to realise two things:

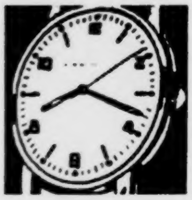
1. Homeschooling requires a great conviction and commitment to work so I am not putting his name on the waiting list 'just in case' (It is a bit like having the divorce papers filled in before you marry).

2. I need to make sure I am not cracking up and do more reading, networking and attending homeschool functions. All of which I have been neglecting lately.



TIME REQUIREMENTS FOR HOMESCHOOLING IN N.S.W.

by Jo-Anne Beirne



Many homeschoolers have recently asked me about the numbers of hours and days "required" by the N.S.W guidelines to homeschool.

The actual wording is as follows:
6. *"............The total teaching time should be sufficient to allow for coverage of that body of work that could be undertaken by a student working 5 hours daily for 200 days per year. Some students may cover this work in less time."*

This wording was not written by accident, but after careful consideration and discussion between practising homeschoolers and The Board of Studies. They were written to allow for the unique situation that is homeschooling and the children who follow this learning alternative. Some of the specific reasons follow:

1. Most homeschooling parents have been at pains over the years to deny the 'hothousing' label. Obviously if a parent so desired it would be easy to accelerate a homeschooling child in say the language, science and mathematics areas purely by virtue of the amount of one to one tuition and back-up that the child would receive. When you are sure that a child understands a topic and is competent at it you can easily move on, at their own pace, without doing tens of examples. I can give many examples of children, including my own, who have done 2 or even 3 years of school-type Maths texts in a year.

It has been my experience however, that most homeschooling parents do not usually choose this option, rather they present their child with a very broad programme that is certainly comprehensive and detailed (though not necessarily) written and rarely aimed at acceleration. It was recognised by the people who worked on the guidelines that forcing homeschoolers to do 5 hours face to face "school-type" teaching per day could indeed pressure homeschoolers onto the acceleration path.

2. When one is dealing with only a couple of students, as in homeschooling, one is very aware of what those students are doing and is constantly integrating their work across their curriculum, virtually the learning/teaching programme is happening all waking hours 365 days/year. This is not to say that school children don't learn all their waking hours 365 days/year as well, only that for homeschoolers the learning of all these times is connected to their living and their "school" life and it is more likely to be integrated across a broad spectrum of subject areas not disjointed into compartments.

Homeschoolers, legitimately feel that the "learning facilitator" is more likely to be aware of from where the learning springs, has a better idea where to direct her individual child and the connections to further explore. For example a child who suddenly becomes very interested in rocks will most likely have that learning met by visiting the geological mining museum, being given or read to from books on same, accessing friends and others with knowledge of rocks, watching T.V programs about the history of the Earth etc in a very flexible manner. Homeschoolers are able to eliminate the time-costly situations of class control, administrative paperwork and change of teachers, who must "get to know" the class again, from year to year.

With these issues in mind the guideline concerning "'amount of time spent on education" was written so as to ensure that school children and homeschool children receive equivalent education in terms of coverage and quality rather than in terms of numbers of hours applied. There is also recognition of the fact that the "school-type" body of work is often covered in the homeschool in a shorter period of time.

Personally, I agree that the state has a legitimate interest in seeing that all its citizens are educated. The welfare cost of those that aren't is an enormous and ongoing budgetary concern for all of us. Homeschoolers are charged with the same responsibility as are all schools - to educate children efficiently and regularly to standards that are generally accepted by all educators and outlined in the "curriculum guidelines" for each key learning area, but there is no specific requirement as to hours and days of teaching. The requirements on homeschoolers, as regards the application of an educational programme are no greater or less than for schools, though a good deal more flexible, and the time element is recognised as being a guide for homeschoolers.

NADIA WHEATLEY - the well known author of "My Place' & other books on studying books in schools.

DONE TO DEATH: SHOULD BOOKS BE 'USED' OR READ?

A few years ago I was on a conference panel with Patricia Wrightson, Jan Mark and Libby Gleeson, and a member of the audience asked: 'How would you like your books to be used?'

One of the panel answered in a steely voice: 'I don't want them "used" — I want them *read*.'

While that succinctly sums up my own gut feelings about the matter, I accept that children's fiction *will* be used in the classroom. So, rather than rail against the fact, it seems sensible to try to suggest some guidelines. Before I start, I should quickly say that I am not concerned here with the sort of literary studies that secondary students do, but with the use of a work of fiction in areas such as social studies, language development — even maths — in the primary curriculum. I should also say that the following very obvious comments are not based on my own experience in the classroom, but on the sort of feedback I have received from students who have had both good and bad times 'using' my books.

So — Rule 1 is *Enjoyment*. The most important thing, if a book is to be 'used', is for the teacher to be sure that the children are enjoying the book as a book — as a *story*. And of course if this is to happen, the teacher herself must enjoy not only this particular book, but also the act of reading. This is not to say that the teacher must love all books; indeed, the indiscriminate and uncritical love of books is as deadening as not loving them at all. However, if a teacher is to impart enjoyment of literature, then she must herself be the kind of person who sometimes gets so carried away by a book that she neglects to do the housework — or prepare her lessons.

In line with this theme of enjoyment, I'd like to quote a kind of warning I tried to give back in 1987, when *My Place* was first published.

> *My Place* is many things, but one thing it *isn't* is a textbook. I wrote it in the hope that it would start Australian children thinking in a new way about history — and about themselves, their families, their homes, their environments. I hoped that it might make history seem real, immediate and interesting. Though I think that *My Place* could also be a useful teaching aid, as far as I'm concerned the book will have failed if even one child thinks: 'Oh, *My Place*, yuk! That's the book that's full of work!' ... Please bear in mind that *the book is a picture story-book, and that it's meant to be enjoyed*.

If Rule 1 is *Enjoyment*, Rule 2 is *There are no rules*. By this I mean that there are no formulae or recipes for the successful or suitable use of a book in the classroom: the teacher alone can decide what is appropriate in the context of her particular students.

Here it is vital that the teacher respects what the children bring to a book. Though I know this goes against the whole system of curriculum preparation, I would suggest that teachers should *not* be very well prepared about what they plan to 'do' with a book: to a great extent this should be determined by the children's response. Only in the light of this can the teacher decide what activities would interest her class — or rather, what activities would interest particular children in her class, for if the book is at all complex, different children will probably be excited by quite different aspects. The teacher must also know *when to stop*.

The key to all this of course is the teacher's own expertise, her own imagination, her own perception of her students. That is why I am very wary of published sets of teachers' notes, for if works of fiction *must* be 'used' in the classroom, I fully believe that teachers themselves are able to think up the most interesting and appropriate activities.

An obvious problem here is time — or rather, the paucity of funding for education. It is very hard to think up special activities for different children when the class is too crowded, when you have little preparation time, when you may only have one or two copies of the book that you are working on. But beyond this, I think teachers must develop their confidence in themselves and in their own responses to a book, so that that they trust their own judgement rather than relying on the interpretations of professional note-writers.

Finally, I would like to ask you always to remember that books are not tadpoles. By this I mean that I sometimes find people — whether educationalists or critics or film-makers — who seem to think that a book is a sort of *stage* of creation which, under the right circumstances, can develop into a veritable frog (which can in turn, if kissed by the right person, even become a prince). Or perhaps a better analogy would be to say that some people tend to regard a book as a kind of packet cake mix: as the basic raw material which must be added to and stirred and cooked before it reaches its proper form.

In fact, of course, the book *is* the frog, the prince, the cake: it is an end in itself, and all that needs to be done to it is to read it.

Developing Good Learning Skills

—— *Pat Nelson* ——

Homeschooled children obviously have parents who are committed to academic achievement. But as parents, we sometimes doubt our ability to successfully educate our children, and when these doubts surface we become less effective. Parents need to realize that their children's success may depend less on *what* we teach them than on how well we can instill a love of learning that will continue throughout their lives.

To effectively develop a love of learning in our children, our role is to stimulate their natural curiosity. In her book, *I Learn Better By Teaching Myself* (Home Education Press, 1990), homeschooling mother Agnes Leistico states, "The old saying, 'You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink,' expresses the futility of forcing a student to learn something when she does not think she can succeed and/or she is just not interested in the topic." Success comes not from forcing a rigid curriculum on a child, but rather from opening the mind to questioning, to exploring possibilities, and to the joy of learning.

There are steps we can take to enhance our children's learning skills:

Encourage reading. Start reading to your children when they are babies and read to them every day. After they learn to read by themselves, they will still enjoy the stories they can't yet master on their own. Give them a free rein in what they choose to read. Even books that you may feel have no literary merit can be surprising tools for learning. I have never censored a book in my home. If I don't approve of a book personally, I explain the reasons to my children. This can open the door to a discussion of values or choices in life.

Make frequent trips to the library. Help your children select books related to their interests, such as hobbies, pets, or famous people. Teach them how to use the card catalog, and as they get older, the ***Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature***, the ***Guide to Books in Print***, and reference books such as encyclopedias, *The World Almanac*, and the dictionary. And don't limit yourself to your community library. Introduce your child to the libraries at community colleges and universities, and even your local museum. Teaching your children how to research is one of the most valuable tools you can give them.

Encourage problem solving and logical thinking. Whether studying math, history, or science, relating a problem to your children's interests will create a natural desire to seek a solution. Try to get them to think up personal connections. use illustrations, analogies, examples, and hands-on experience as teaching aids. For example, if you wanted to teach the skill of classification, you might suggest sorting the family laundry into piles and labeling each one (shirts, socks, pants, or wash and wear, lights and darks). Some hobbies such as collecting baseball cards or stamps lend themselves well to classification skills.

Expose your older children to current events. Encourage them to think about social, economic, and political problems, but be ready to listen to some idealistic viewpoints. Ask "Can you tell me your reasons for forming that opinion?" You don't have to agree with your children's viewpoints, but you can respect them.

Control television viewing. It is estimated that children watch up to 18,000 hours of television by the time they are 18, and in recent years programs have become less discriminate in the showing of sex and violence. There is much criticism of television, but it can also be a valuable learning tool. Let the age and maturity level of the children be a guide in program viewing. Help your children select the shows they want to see, and then try to watch these programs with them so that you can discuss important topics that might be raised, or pose questions to underlying suggestions on the show that concern you, such as sexism, violence, or prejudices.

For the older child you might find cable stations that transmit local college courses. Even though your children are not enrolled in the course, the programs can enhance their education and even qualify for covering the subject to meet high school requirements. You can purchase the accompanying text at the college book store. If you make an appointment with the professor teaching the course and explain what you are doing, many of them are delighted to recommend appropriate outside projects to accompany the studies.

Talk with, not to, your children. Communication skills are often the most difficult to achieve, whether with our spouses, our children, or the public. Listen to your children when they talk about what is important to them. Truly listening to children enhances positive feelings about themselves and teaches them, by example, how to listen to parents, siblings, and other adults and children. It encourages cooperation. Ask them questions, and show that you respect their opinions, even if you don't always agree with them. Try not to criticize. instead, point out options. Ask them if they have considered other particular alternatives, and give them the opportunity to mull the information over in their minds. Help them articulate their feelings and be willing to discuss yours. (I really felt scared when your father was ill. I bet you did, too.")

Promote self-esteem. Helping children develop positive self-esteem is probably the most consequential thing a parent can do for children, because self-esteem is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. Show your children that you value them for their decency or personality, not for grades or competitiveness. Whenever possible, give your children the opportunity to make decisions that affect themselves, particularly in areas of their education.

Emphasize the positive things they do, not the bad. Give ample praise, a special privilege or increased responsibility for a job well done. Responsibilities make children feel useful and valued.

Teach your children the value of negotiation and compromise so that they can learn the importance of being a team player and the ability to see the "whole picture." Children with high self-esteem are able to make good decisions, take pride in their accomplishments, accept responsibility and cope with frustration.

Set a good example. If you are enthusiastic about learning and show that you value education, your children will, also. As your children's primary model for attitudes and learning skills, you are always teaching.

Maintain a sense of humor. It helps everyone keep perspective on what is important and what isn't. Let your children know that you feel good about yourself and your accomplishments, that you take pride in yourself as an individual and as a parent. Also, let them see that you can make mistakes and can learn from them. Express your values, but go beyond telling them to "do this because its the right thing to do." Describe the experiences that helped you form your beliefs, the reason behind your feelings. Let your children see that you treat them and other people with respect and courtesy. Remember, children do learn by example.

It will also help to recognize your children's personal learning style. Do they learn better by verbal, visual or tactile stimulation? Do they need more structure to discipline themselves or more flexibility to hold their interest?

The late John Holt, who has been called the father of interest-initiated learning, believed that there is a common pattern in the way children learn. He observed that children alternate cycles of rapid learning with periods of reflection. He claimed that these patterns could be neither predicted, nor controlled, and that children, given the opportunity, will successfully direct their own learning. In *How Children Learn* (1983), John Holt wrote, "All I am saying can be summed up in two words: Trust children. Nothing could be more simple, or more difficult. Difficult, because to trust children we must first learn to trust ourselves, and most of us were taught as children that we could not be trusted."

Perhaps, then, the best way we can help our children is to provide an environment of love and encouragement conducive to learning and then to trust their individual learning pattern and natural curiosity.

HEM

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NATURAL LEARNING by Joanne Brugmans

Natural learning still feels right for us - our children's ages are now 8,5 & 3.

These days a great value seems to be placed on things being "natural" as opposed to refined, processed or artificial and it also feels appropriate for me to follow natural approaches with regard to my children's education. I see that learning happens all the time if my children feel safe, happy and confident. No matter where we are or what we are doing my children are learning. I should not concern myself if this learning parallels the learning school children are doing. However as schools are trying to get children to learn many things they would naturally learn anyway (particularly in the primary years) there are in fact many parallels. As for those learning areas where some people feel worried children would never learn unless "schooled", I say wait and see, it is very likely that at some stage in their lives those areas will be of relevance and interest to them and if not I don't see any reason for them to learn those things.

I never feel that because one day my children might go to school I'd better make sure they "keep up" now. If something major ever happens in our lives and school is a necessity, they will cope. Children are very resilient and manage to cope with many difficulties when faced with them. I've recently met a family where this has happened and although it was rough going for a few weeks the children eventually all settled in well.

As our natural learning approach progresses I can see many benefits relating to my children's developments, relationships within our family, confidence in learning, attitudes to learning, maintaining acceptable family stress levels and general happiness and freedom for us all. All these pluses help keep us on the natural learning home education trail.

Real learning, that my children do naturally happens continually. If they are interested they learn. Being interested is I feel, a major influence - learning cannot help but follow. As my children have been following their own curiosities since birth this style of learning is no effort and is simply a part of living in this world.

It seems interesting to me that every normal healthy child, learns using natural learning methods, how to walk or talk for example, until age 5 or so and then a severe percentage fail in an area such as reading or maths after a few years of being "schooled".

I never pull a topic out of thin air and say "this week we will learn about kings and queens", for example. Learning does not happen like that here. We live, we follow our interests and we share time with each other. If a child wants to know about kings and queens there will be a reason - something will have inspired them and it will be a natural part of my parenting to assist that child in ways I can to help answer those questions and inspire more learning. It is the same as when a child learns to walk. Parents show natural encouragement and interest, play with the child and enjoy the whole process, e.g. "see if you can walk to daddy, now over to me, Oh terrific!".

I also try to involve myself in learning experiences that I really enjoy and not to take part in activities I'm not keen on.

All my reading and meeting with other home educating families, all my interaction with children and adults who have been schooled, my own experience of school teaching and my observations of natural learning situations have led me to the conclusion that natural learning is an extremely pleasant and efficient way to learn.

I also have my own life to lead and though parenting is a big part of it, spending several hours each day "homeschooling" my children is not (not that I mean this approach should not be an option for other families). It is important for me to have my own needs met and then I can give a great deal to my children. Mostly they play, do things for themselves, share time with me as I do things, go on outings, listen to books being read, look at and read books on their own, talk, ask questions, interact with each other, spend time with other adults and children and of course more. Jaap (my husband) and I are here to put in our energies when we feel it is appropriate. We answer our children's questions, we tell them of things we think of, hear about or see that we feel may be of interest to them. We involve them in experiences we think they'll enjoy. We share our lives with them.

......and our children are developing and growing into responsible intelligent people who are making their own lives for themselves even now as they are quite young.

NATURAL LEARNING WORKSHOP

conducted by Jo-Anne Beirne

COST $5 per adult attending.
R.S.V.P. by phone by 31stJanuary on 02 629 3727 .
Please leave your phone number in case we need to contact you.
VENUE: Woodstock Community Center Church St Burwood
TIME: 1 - 5 P.M.
CHILDREN: Most welcome if they are breast-fed or quiet and supervised, there is a wonderful play area outside and shade.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

- *Individual learning styles - what's yours, what are your children's?*
- *What will natural learning mean long term?*
- *Exploding the myth of the school model of learning.*
- *Discussion of some of the material written on natural learning.*
- *A natural learning approach = a real-life program.*

Some of the obvious questions that come up about 'natural learning' include the following:
1. How can you guarrantee that children will learn anything if you let them direct the learning? i.e. You don't really believe, do you, that kids, will choose to do reading, writing, grammar, spelling, history and arithmetic, surely they must be made to do these things?
2. How can you possibly structure a day to fit in all the things that need to be done, if you have more than one child and they are all leading you around in different directions at the same time pursuing their own natural learning?
3.Won't natural learning lead to undisciplined learning and how will such people ever get a job? i.e Children flitting from subject to subject and never getting to the bottom of anything, or even the opposite - becoming too involved in one subject and never seeing the whole larger learning picture.

PROGRAMMING

One of the most common enquiries I field on homeschooling is "How do I know what to teach?" While all education systems in each state probably have certain goals that they aim all school children to achieve by certain stages, the fact is that education, beyond the 3 R's and what to "teach" is politicised and full of value judgements.

Whether you purchase a pre-packaged curriculum with Christian or alternative philosophies or whether you borrow or design a "school-type" or unschooling type program to teach from you are making statements about what you want your children to know and learn just as a state education system does.

You may feel that you want your children to learn reading by a 'phonics' method or to approach maths calculations from a soild base of table learning. On the other hand you might make your program emphasise practical learning before book learning e.g. lots of shopping transactions to understand the value of money and experience real addition and subtraction and/or assuming that reading will come if a child lives in an environment with books and is read to very often.

There is no one way to write a program and it seems to me that investigating which way suits both you and your child and evolving a program over the years to meet your needs is the very best way to get yourself some professional development - i.e. a short cut to a degree in real learning. Homeschoolers are at the forefront of original learning because they are primarily concerned with what is "good for their children" and are quite prepared to do things different from the norm.

Please remember that if you are really concerned with developing the individual learning potential of your child that there is no one "purchased" program you should be using and no standard ideal from which to copy. Your own program is the best program. However for those people who would like to look at the program of an experienced homeschooler Robyn Mikhaiel has kindly offered to share hers with us.

Program of learning for Hannah and Naomi Mikhaiel

PHILOSOPHY

Since our program for Hannah and Naomi is to be oriented toward their learning rather than toward what we intend to teach them, I feel that it is inappropriate for me to map out a detailed course of study for 1992. In the 3 years that we have been teaching Hannah at home, I have observed that children learn best the things in which they are either interested or see some real value in, whether that purpose be immediate or of future value.

The enthusiasm of myself or others also can have some influence as well. It seems to me that children do not necessarily want to know everything about a subject or topic at one time but rather that they approach learning in a rather unpredictable way, and it is more like the way one might approach a jigsaw puzzle. Isolated bits are examined; relationships between bits are suddenly seen after examining individual bits and comparing them from different perspectives. One jumps from one part of the picture to another as other bits take one's interest, but gradually the whole thing begins to come together to form a meaningful picture.

The more sections completed, the quicker the growth of the whole becomes, but often there are some pieces that are left and returned to time and again before their relevance can be seen. Everyone uses different strategies to put the pieces together, but given time and an incentive plus the necessary encouragement and sometimes help from others, the picture usually emerges, assuming that all the pieces are available or can be found of course!

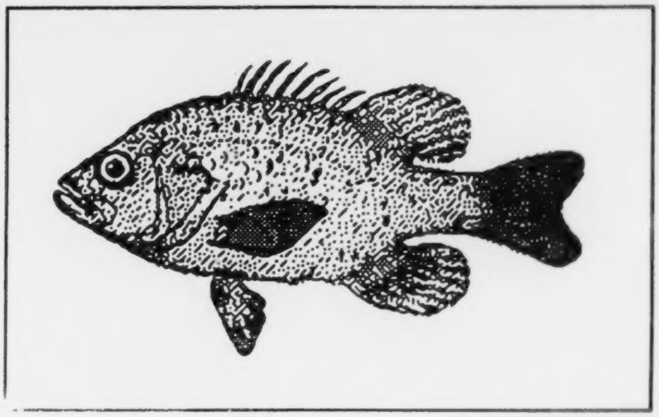
Part of Robyn Mikhaiel's Program continued

Thus it is our aim, not to prescribe what Hannah and Naomi should learn and how and when, but rather to foster their desire to make sense of the world by recognising and valuing their strategies and aking sure the pieces are there by giving them access to materials, people and any other resources and helping them develop the skills necessary for them to practise those strategies as well. We would also aim to give them as broad an experience of life as would seem appropriate and helpful for their age and ability to cope.

We recognise of course that the "picture of life" is a complex one and we would be very arrogant in assuming that we can know or find all the necessary bits, but we also believe that God has a purpose for our lives and the lives of our children, as part of our family and as part of the wider community and so we endeavour also to encourage our children to know this as a frame of reference in all their growth and learning. Knowing, just for the sake of knowing can be rather futile, but knowing so as to be able to grow to maturity and use one's abilities for the highest purpose is indeed a worthwhile thing.

If you would like to share your program please send it to

Jo-Anne Beirne
P.O. Box 420
Kellyville 2153



SPECIFIC SUBJECT AIMS:

MATHEMATICS

General Aims:

- To give Hannah and Naomi the opportunity to develop sound mathematical understandings and skills, building on their previous skills and knowledge.
- To demonstrate the application of mathematics to the real world, thus recognising the relevence and importance of the study of the same.

Method

- The N.S.W. syllabus is our basic guide to acqaint us with the scope of mathematical concepts and helpful approaches to gaining understanding of these concepts.
- We use a combination of oral, practical and written stategies, sometimes using a variety of workbooks, but wherever possible using real life situations and examples to stress the purpose of maths as a tool rather than an end in itself.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Aims

- To allow Hannah and Naomi opportunities to develop social skills and attitudes, through interaction with family, friends and neighbours, and other children and adults in informal and formal situation. Such skills should include:
- Tolerance of other points of view and ways of behaving.
- Caring about others, even the "unlovely".
- Sharing of possessions, attention, skills and ideas.
- Ability to express ideas and opinions thoughtfully and clearly.
- Responsibility in care of possessions, suitable household tasks, general helpfulness, unselfishness and cooperation.
- Discernment in dealing with "unknown" people.
- Realistic view of self and others.
- A firm set of personal moral and spiritual values, based on increasing knowledge of God and the Bible.

Activities through which these aims may be achieved.

- Family life in the home and community.
- Regular attendance at Church and Sunday school.
- Regular attendance at Girls Club.
- Visit and be visited by relatives in Sydney and country.
- Visits with other groups in church and camp/conference situations.
- Visits to and from families associated with our work (including Australian, Iranian, Philipino, Turkish, Syrian families)
- Play with neighbours' children.
- Meet with other families who are homeschooling their children, in arranged joint activities and on a purely social basis

ROBYN MIKHAIELS' PROGRAM continued.

MUSIC

Aims:

*To encourage a positive attitude towards music

*To help Hannah and Naomi develop the aural capacities, understandings and skills which make possible:

-response to music in an individual way,

-active participation in music, which includes enthusiastic and sensitive performance,

-awareness and appreciation of various cultural traditions, past music traditions and present practices,

-increased enjoyment of music.

*To provde opportunities for Hannah and Naomi to learn through participation in musical activities at a level consistent with their developmental needs and interests.

Objectives:

*Develop the ability to listen with awareness and discrimination.

*Understand the inter-relation of experiences in performing, creating and listening.

*Participate confidently in performance through singing, playing, a moving, with opportunities to develop a range of performance skills a techniques as a means of both expressing and interpreting.

*Develop awareness of sound as a raw material which can appreciated in itself, or organised into compositions.

*Understand how others have worked with sou

*Develop self-direction, self-motivation and the creative skills improvisation and composition.

*Acquire a knowledge of musical vocabulary as the need arises.

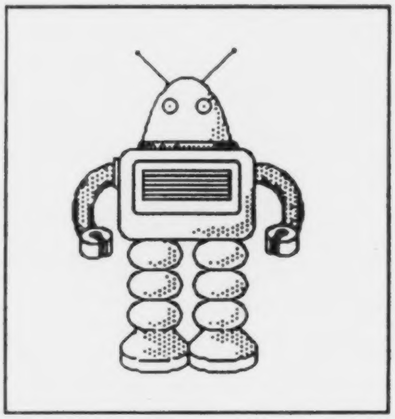
*Develop understanding and techniques in the use of symbols used notate sounds, as the need arises.

*To express and communicate through music, her ideas, feelings beliefs.

*Evaluate their own music and the music of others in context.

*achieve a sense of satisfaction and enjoyment through wor creatively.

*View their own music activities as worthwhile. (Music K-6, p



SCIENCE

General Aims:

*to involve Hannah and Naomi in as much direct observation of the environment and processes at work in the environment as possible so as to allow them to gain understanding of

*the variety in living things
*the characteristics of living things
*the needs of living things
*change
*adaptation
*interdependence

*To look at these concepts in *the living world
*the physical world
and *the world of people and the environment.

Method:

*We will follow the children's natural interests where possible,using direct observation and experiment where possible and our own, library and "expert" resourses where possible and o necessary. This usually leads us to finding out about lots of things we did not know about or know that we would be interested in. It is a very exciting field of discovery,especially for me, who never had an opportunity to study biology before!

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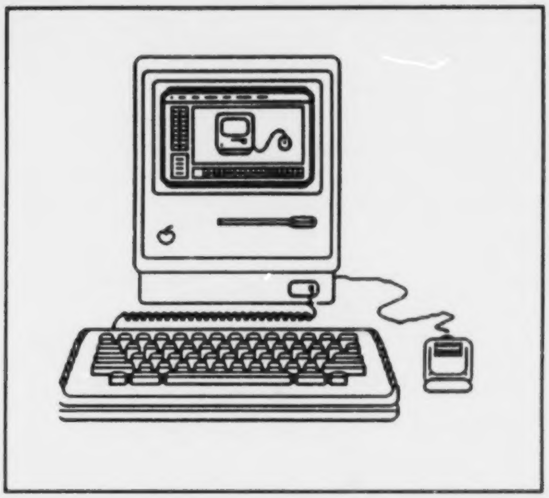

HOMESCHOOLING SUPPORT GROUPS AND EVENTS

Australian Capital Territory

Canberra Home Education Network Claire Powell 06 251 6663 & Jo Boehm 06 248 5962

NEW SOUTH WALES

Blue Mountains music/art group Rosa Geenen first meeting 3rdFeb 047 396403
Burwood Homeschoolers Group first meeting 13th Feb Ann White 045 712 107
Camden group Sue Dowey 046 311180
Carlingford/North Rocks - Frances Calvert 871 8497
Central Coast Group Activities- contact Peter or Lily Nesbitt-Hawes (043) 621473 first meeting 16th Feb
Goulburn group Sharon Bell 048 219403
Homeschoolers Australia Preparing a program/ curriculum Woodstock Community Center 18th January 1992. Natural Learning Workshop -Woodstock Community Centre 1st February 1992.
Moss Vale Group contact Sue McAulay 048 681 094
Newcastle Group Carolyn Arthur 049 665098
Nimbin group Joanne Brugmans 066 897473
Northern Sydney 10th Feb Elizabeth Orr 856900
North Western Sydney Group Roz Hancock 6271308
Quirindi Homeschoolers Lynn Cherry 067 462284
Southern Sydney Homeschool Group Debbie Armanious first meeting 6th Feb 02 529 2032
Western Sydney - Rhonda Pritchard 673 3821 29.1.92
Wollongong Group Robyn Brodal 042 840 512

QUEENSLAND

EMU PARK (near Rockhampton) HOMESCHOOL WEEKEND 5-8 June contact Kathy Boles 2 Richard St, Emu Park 4702

TASMANIA

John & Camille Peacock 134, Main Rd, Claremont 7011 002 492 369
Georgie Holderness Roddam 155 Main Rd, Austin's Ferry 7011. 002 491 579

VICTORIA

Hawthorn Regular meetings are held at the A.E.R.G. office 39 William St. Victoria 3122 03 818-3674
Mt Waverley - Families Honouring Christ John Angelico 03 543 5237
NOWA NOWA HOMESCHOOL WEEKEND Labour Day Weekend March 1992 contact Rose Tresvaskis 051 557 242
Werribee - Christian Family Homeschool Assoc. Frank Marrett 03 741 1490
PRACTICAL HOMESCHOOLING CONFERENCE 15.2.92 10-5p.m contact Frank Marrett.
Yarra Valley group Karen Williams 059 669 063

WEST AUSTRALIA

Home Based Learners Network - Perth newsletter Sue Warner 13 Coongan Ave Greenmount 6056. Enquiries Elva 09 307 1232 and Anita 09 401 7546.
Rainbow Coast Homeschoolers Gina Wright 87 Scotsdale St Denmark 098 481671
Sonlight Homeschoolers Karen Lortey 097 311 817.

If you know of other homeschool groups who would like to be included on this list please tell me.

Anne Sullivan, Helen Keller's mentor and friend, said, "I am beginning to suspect all elaborate and special systems of education. They seem to me to be built upon the supposition that every child is a kind of idiot who must be taught to think. Whereas if the child is left to himself, he will think more and better, if less showily. Let him come and go freely, let him touch real things and combine his impressions for himself, instead of sitting indoors at a little round table while a sweet voiced teacher suggests that he build a stone wall with his wooden blocks, or make a rainbow out of strips of coloured paper, or plant straw trees in flower pots. Such teaching fills the mind with artificial associations which must be got rid of before the child can develop independent ideas out of actual experiences."

Quoted from an article by Earl Stevens titled What is unschooling?

My favourite homeschool reading

The Home School Reader (Edited M. & H. Hegener), **I Learn better by Teaching Myself** (A. Leistico), **Home Education Magazine** (bimonthly)
Available from Home Education Press, Box 1083 Tonasket WA 98855; U.S.A. Ph: 509 486 1315

Learning all the Time, Shared Treasures, Teach Your Own (J. Holt); **Better than School, Child's Work** (N. Wallace) **A Life Worth Living, The Myth of Learning Disabilities** (S. Sheffer) **G.W.S** (bimonthly)
Available from John Holt's Book & Music Store, 2269 Massachusetts Ave, Cambridge Mass 02140 U.S.A. Ph. 617 864 3100

Schooling at Home (Edited P. O'Mara)
Available from John Muir publications, P.O. Box 613, Santa Fe, NM 87504 U.S.A
Mothering Magazine (bimonthly)
P.O. Box 532 Mt. Morris, IL 61054-7856

The Three R's at Home (S.Richman)
Available PA Homeschoolers RD 2, Box 117, Kittanning, PA 16201; Ph 412-783 6512.

Homeschooling for Excellence (Colfax)
Available from Mountain House Press, Box 353, Philo CA, 95466.U.S.A

Homeschool Burnout, Homestyle Teaching, Home Spun Schools, Home Grown Kids (R & D Moore)
Available from The Moore Foundation P.O. Box 1 Camas WA 98607 U.S.A

For the Children's Sake (S. Shaeffer Macaulay)
Available from Crossway Books 9825 W. Roosevelt Rd. Westchester, IL 60153 U.S.A. Ph.312 345 7474

ARTWORK of John Holt and The Moores copied from Home Education Magazine - P.O. Box 1083 Tonaskei WA 98855 U.S.A
Trapkus, Stuffelbeam & Civik.

DR. & MRS. RAYMOND MOORE

Australian Homeschool Journal

ISSUE 33 MARCH- APRIL 1992
Editor: Jo-Anne Beirne

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I encourage you to support our magazine by asking your friends to subscribe rather than lending your own copies of the Journal, which is produced at great expense of my personal and family time and energy.

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The Mentoring Method Jj Fallick p. 25-26
Reprinted (in part) from Home Education magazine.
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NEXT ISSUE

*** MATHS**

*** MUSIC**

*** UNIVERSITIES & THEIR ATTITUDES TO HOMESCHOOLERS**

NEWS & INFORMATION

SUPPORT GROUPS AND NETWORK INFORMATION.

Humble apologies are in order for all the "lost, forgotten or mislaid" entries that missed the Support Group information page in the last issue.

1. Can I really have forgotten the excellent "Homeschool Network newsletter"? (considering I subscribe myself) and the excellent work Anne White and many others do facilitating meetings/functions/learning days at Burwood. Of course people travel from all over to get to the network's events and it is not just a Burwood meeting. I believe the new editors of the newsletter are Barbara Braethen & Lyn Keen, more details as they come to hand. The address for subscription details is still (I think) Anne White P.O. Box 71 North Richmond.

2. Maureen Tully is the editor of a magazine called "Welcome Home Australia" P.O. Box 768 Jamison Centre ACT 2614. This newsletter is for Christian women, homeschoolers and families "who believe that all Scripture including Titus 2: 3-5, is the inspired and infallible word of God and constitutes completed and final revelation." Subscription $20/year/family. Maureen also organises a support group in Canberra.

3. I incorrectly put in Sue Dowey's group as Camden area it should have been Macarthur area. Her phone number is 046 311180.

RESOURCES

The N.S.W Department of Education publishes a book titled Learning Resources Catalogue. This publication details the K-12 materials available for sale that have been initiated and developed by teachers for classroom use. It also lists an extensive range of professional development material, publications & videos from the Department and other sources in areas such as craft, drama, health studies, maths, music, science, social studies, visual art, home economics, languages etc. For more detals please contact **The Curriculum and Resources Management Centre 3a Smalls Rd North Ryde or ring 808 9444.**

EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTERS

If you are interested to see more of the resources, computers, equipment and texts etc. used in the school system don't forget to consult the front of your white pages directory page 52 (Sydney) for details of your local Education Resource Centre (E.R.C.) you are very welcome to go visit them in business hours.

HOMESCHOOL CHILDREN'S NEWSLETTER

A couple of years ago I had the idea to get the older homeschool group of children to start a newsletter to mail among themselves that required minimal cost, adult intervention and work. The idea was to encourage them to get to know each other and develop their creative talents. There were no specific requirements or competitions merely a sharing of thoughts, ideas, puzzles, games, jokes, drawings, autobiographies etc. The process entailed getting together a list of approximately 12 families who had interested children, giving each a copy of the months that they were to be responsible for editing and mailing the newsletter and then let it run its course. It was extremely successful for the first 18 months and has started again recently, after a hiatus, through the industrious efforts of Susan McAulay. When it is your turn the cost works out as postage 12x standard size envelopes + 12x45c stamps + the cost of photocopying approx 12x4 sheets of paper back and front, once a year (usually around $20). Lots of good learning experiences are involved including mastering the photocopier, being responsible for the end product, purchasing stamps, addressing mail etc.

Four families are already interested in getting another of these newsletters going, so if you would like to join them please ring Catherine Errey 043 621 779 and leave your name address and the age of your children and she will get the first one up and going.

CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS FOR N.S.W SCHOOLS

The Board of Studies on 925 8111 has available (cost?) an excellent booklet titled "Curriculum Requirements for N.S.W. Schools" it is the Board's advice to schools about the implementation of new requirements taking effect from 1992. Including *Guidelines K-6 *Guidelines for the School Certificate * Patterns of Study for the Higher School Certificate *Timeline for the Introduction of new syllabuses *Course descriptions for new courses for 1992.

THE GREATER WESTERN EDUCATION CENTRE (G.W.E.C) Suite 2, 204 Queen St St. Mary's 2760 produces many good publications. One that I have used a great deal is the Excursion Register 1985 which was developed for the use of Met. West teachers planning excursions. I think all homeschoolers would find it very useful for both planning and finding out the existence of many educational places off the beaten track.

SHELLEY AUTUMN HOMESCHOOL CAMP
20th-28th APRIL.

Shelley is a forestry camp 85 km east of Wodonga.

Cost: $4.20/night/person, children under 4 free.

Facilities 80 persons in two long buildings, camping possible.

Activities: Great scope.

Co-ordinator Janet Barnett (060) 216950

Booking Fee $5.

For an A4 page with many more details please send a self addressed stamped envelope to P.O. Box 420 Kellyville 2153 and I'll post you a copy of what Joanne Brugmans sent to me otherwise ring or write to Janet Barnett 2/195 Alexandra St. Albury 2640.

GETTING TO KNOW THE World's Greatest Artists

An imposing name for a series of books and quite well deserved. Aimed at 6-10 year olds these books, from Chicago Children's Press, are written and illustrated by Mike Venezia and are well worth a look as a great introduction, for interested children, to da Vinci, Monet tec. The reproductions are superb.

THE EVERYDAY LIFE OF:

an Irish Pilgrim, German printer, English engineer, Greek potter etc. etc. When these easy to read & interesting history books came out a couple of years ago they were around $17.95 each. Now I notice K-Mart has them and all the books in the "MacDonald country series" on special in hard back for $2 each.

AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION FOR THE FAMILY

This excellent hard working organisation is tirelessly devoted to the elimination of pornographic and violent videos, magazines, movies etc. in Australia. If anyone is interested in helping them in their fight, through any number of ways including prayerful support I recommend their dedication, honesty and effectiveness most highly. Just as you have become an educator you can become a strong voice in speaking out against the degradation of pornography. For more deatils please send a self addressed stamped envelope to Aust. Fed. for the Family P.O. Box 106 Canterbury Victoria 3126.

LETTERS

GWEN ANDERSON

Just wanted to drop you a short note to thank you so much for your help, and all you're putting in to the seminars, meetings & journal. I do really appreciate it, as for me personally it has helped me understand a lot better how to explain what I've been doing all these years. Even though I have been homeschooling a long time I feel in no way experienced or that I know it all, it has been exciting to see how much more there is to learn. The seminar on "Writing a Program" was very helpful, especially for my teenagers- mainly in helping us get a better "handle" on it and more direction. And with the Natural Learning Workshop of Feb. 1st the kids and I are having lots more fun and excitement just in seeing more possibilites for us to "learn" the things they want- a couple of them are all excited again about continuing their Japanese language studies & characters practise which they had wearied of in the last couple of years. A recent "Australian History" excursion to Parramatta's Old Government House that I planned, turned into quite an exciting study of handcrafts, embroidery and needlework ideas for my two girls and a stimulating science lesson on how the whale oil lamps, kitchen flues, and implements operated. It was a real "hands on" experience. It even became an exercise in deciding how to adapt our own kitchen to energy-saving ideas. I can see that I'm the main one who is learning how to change and adapt to where the kids want to go. I was impressed to see Don Haddon at the Feb. 1st meeting, he seems open to things and an interested, normal and reasonable person. I guess it was a little like you mentioned in a recent article that never having met anyone from the Department everything was a little bit unknown to me ! Again, many thanks.

JULIE PINAZZA, Mt. Kembla

Just wanted to let you know how much I appreciate the work you have put into publishing the Homeschool Journal. It is a very professional publication which I have enjoyed reading immensely. It is stimulating to have a journal contributed to by our colleagues. The access to resources and awareness of other publications is also great. Hope you are having a great year of learning with your children. After the Guggenheim exhibition our boys are having real fun creating masterpieces. May God Bless you and your family.

MARG PONTIN Albany W.A.

Hi ! Just a quick note to say thank you for your support and encouragement. I wanted to write to say hello because it was you I contacted in the first place when I considered homeschooling two years ago. I took my Year 2 daughter out of school in 1991 and homeschooled last year. I had a lot of ups and downs, mainly trying to fit it in with a new baby (my 4th) and a kindy child. Also, my daughter and I tussle with issues of authority and control and it is not easy. However, as I was on the point of giving up your AHJ arrived and I saw an advert. for 'Homeschool Burnout' by Raymond and Dorothy Moore. I ordered it and read it within days. It turned me around and gave me just the encouragement to continue on this year. I would highly recommend this book to anyone. Keep up the good work !

Science - Resource Information & Workshop

Rosemary Hafner, Board of Studies Authorised person, has been co-ordinating a superb science resource to accompany the K-6 Science and Technology Syllabus and Teaching Kit. It consists of an amazingly cheap video and 80 page book. The whole product is of an incredibly high standard and my children have really enjoyed the video and a couple of the issues pursued so far, through the Research Reports.

Shona Sadlier, who is herself a scientist, told me she was particularly impressed with the references listed under each topic. For instance if you or your children are interested in bats, PET recycling, streams, communications, geothermal power, solar homes, the platypus, shore watching, saving the bush etc. the book tells you where to write for more info. as well as giving an overview. It is most up to date and the presentations by the Channel Nine Earthquest people are excellent.

This resource could easily be used by homeschoolers over a large age range and many years, yet is less than the price of a standard single year textbook. The reason it is so cheap is that the presenters, co-ordinators, Sanitarium & Channel 9 donated their services and the only cost involved is production cost. (It is also printed on recycled paper). I highly recommend this as a great science resource.

For more details or to purchase please contact the Board of Studies .

SCHOOL VIDEO & RESEARCH REPORTS

Earth Quest is a series of award-winning environmental programs presented nationally on the Nine Network by its leading news and current affairs personalities.

Seven fascinating segments on the Environment are featured in the Earth Quest School Video. They have been specifically chosen to accompany the Earth Quest Research Reports booklet. The complete kit complements the K-6 Science and Technology Syllabus and Teaching Kit.

At $5 00 (video) and $6 50 (Research Reports booklet) plus postage and packing, the Earth Quest kit provides exceptional value for an excellent teaching resource.

To order the Earth Quest School Video please complete and return with your payment to

Sales Clerk
Communications Branch
Board of Studies
PO Box 460
North Sydney NSW 2059
Phone (02) 925 8111

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Code No.	Title	Quantity Required	Price
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I enclose a cheque/money order for $ made payable to the 'Board of Studies'.

Name: ....
Address: ....
.... Postcode: ....
Date: .... (Please allow 21 days for delivery) Phone ( ) ....
(business hours)

____ Please send me further information on the K-6 Science & Technology Syllabus and Teaching Kit.

DEVELOPING A SCIENCE CURRICULUM for your HOMESCHOOL

2 hour Science Workshop

WEDNESDAY 3RD JUNE 1992

Rosemary Hafner, from the Board of Studies, has kindly volunteered to talk to interested homeschoolers about the process involved in designing and creating a workable approach to teaching your child science. (As well as her background as an inspector of school programs with the Board of Studies, Rosemary is an experienced high school science teacher.)

VENUE: Woodstock Community Centre - Ballroom Church St. Burwood

DATE ; Wed. 3rd JUNE **TIME:** 10.30 a.m.

COST: $2 per person, All welcome.

R.S.V.P: We must have some idea of numbers before 31st May please **CONTACT** Marj Taberner on 868 1218

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LEGAL UPDATES

VICTORIA

Annette Berryman and others from A.E.R.G were responsible for organising a seminar in conjunction with the Education Faculty at Melbourne University on 23/2/92 entitled "The Education (Out of School Education) Bill ,is it really necessary?"

The idea of this seminar was to encourage people from both the homeschooling and alternative schooling movement to become informed on all the issues to do with the proposed legislation and indeed to consider with what legislation they can live. It was well attended and represents a first step along the exhausting but fulfilling road of negotiating legislative and administrative change.

I really encourage everyone to support all those groups in Victoria who are endeavouring to make change happen (The list of groups is to be found in AHJ 32). In the next few weeks there will be an advertisement in The Age newspaper inviting submissions on the issue. I hope that many people find the time and energy to tell our elected officials exactly what they want.

QUEENSLAND

Bob Osmak has sent a copy of information he received from the Minister that states that all the issues that Osmak, Beirne, Foster and Harker have been writing to the Minister about will be attended to at the next meeting of the Home Schooling Review Committee. While this may seem a positive step forward it isn't necessarily, as this Committee actually has no homeschooling members or real knowledge of the practice of home education. Rather it is the arbiter of who shall receive "dispensations" and who shall not.

No home educators, to our knowledge, have ever been allowed to address this Committee despite specific requests to do so. However we will not be giving up the fight to obtain for all Queensland parents (rather than just qualified teachers or those using the Dist. Educ. program) the right to have homeschooling recognised as a legitimate education option. I have prepared a detailed submission and the Minister and the members of the Committee have been sent copies. We have not attempted to approach it from a discrimination or through the Parliamentary Commissioner Act yet but this may well be our next move.

NEW SOUTH WALES

1. It has become common knowledge that around 130 children of Plymouth Brethren have been given conscientious objection status by our enlightened Minister for Education and been allowed to use the Distance Education materials despite living in the suburbs. Many religious groups have deep concerns about the literature component of the English syllabus in high school and it is an indication of the intelligence and sympathies of the Minister that she has recognised and listened to her constituents on this vital issue.

2. Goodbye Inspectors !!!
I am going to try very hard in the future in the Journal to call our "inspectors" - authorised persons or BOSLOs (Board of Studies Liason Officers). From all the feedback I am receiving it could easily be said that in the great majority of cases "Authorised persons" and "BOSLOs" have totally stepped out of all the connotations associated with "inspection" and show parents all the time that they are flexible, reasonable, concerned and interested in the programs and activities being undertaken by competent parents.

3. Many of the "converts" to homeschooling come via "old hands" at homeschooling and for N.S.W. I would like to remind you that it is vitally important to inform friends considering the option that they get a copy of the Board of Studies Application for Registration document (925 8111) and READ it thoroughly !!! It might look a little daunting but it is very valuable, self explanatory and essential if you intend to be well prepared for the BOSLOs visit and receive registration. It is my firm conviction that if someone can't read the form and do as it requires they are going to have a good deal of trouble homeschooling their children.

4. I have been informed by at least two families that on removing their child from school, prior to obtaining registration, they have had a good deal of trouble with their local school principal and Home School Liason Officer. The law is most specific about children being in school before registration, though there has always been a "lag time" that has enabled the administrative undertakings of both sides to occur. If you know of anyone who is considering taking their child out of school you must inform them
(a) To get their application in to the Board as soon as possible. This way the good people in there will inform the HSLOs and avoid possible hassles. (b) To use whatever

resources at their disposal , especially support groups, to get organised as quickly as possible.

5. We believe the number of registered homeschoolers in N.S.W is now around 530, showing steady growth.

6. We have heard that the Opposition Shadow Minister for Education may well try to cause some trouble (media ? political?) for homeschooling at the instigation of an irate relative of a homeschooler. While this is a very small matter it does not hurt for us all to remember that the growth of this education option will not be achieved if the public becomes of the view that it is a frowned upon or dicey alternative. If you see anything written that is damaging or imputes untruths about the option of homeschooling, please drop a small note to the person or outlet concerned expressing your objections. Perhaps those of us in Labor electorates ought to try to visit with our local members or write to them given that the political situation in N.S.W at the moment is in such flux.

WEST AUSTRALIA

Although the decision ultimately lies with the Minister to determine regular and efficient in W.A., Regulation 8 is the ruling which governs the administration of homeschooling. Regulation 8 also allows that District Superintendents are allowed to administer and grant exemptions in their district. This is an extremely dangerous proposition, because it gives virtually unlimited power to non elected bureaucrats and as could be expected a good few discrepancies have come to light in relation to this matter. For instance

1.Some families have been allowed to see their inspectors without their children being present, though this is expressly not allowed under Regulation 8. One parent who did do this after unwitting advice from a local support group was savaged by the inspector for not having the child present and seen as obstructive.

2. Some families have received undated exemptions and no follow up visits , yet Regulation 8 states that the certificate is only in force for a period of one year.

3. The frequency of visits between districts varies enormously (e.g. from 1 -3 visits in a year) as does the volume of paperwork required.

4. The District Superintendents virtually set themselves above the Minister as in a case of complaint recently where a letter to the Superintendent informing him of a complaint before the Minister was greeted with a reply to the effect that as far as he was concerned his ruling still stands. And another superintendent wrote on his letter "I refuse my permission....". We should remember that despite the fact that superintendents see themselves as having total power under Regulation 8, fortunately, ultimate power still lies with the Minister.

5. All things considered it is my belief that the form and requirements are not at all bad as long as they are not interpreted and applied in the heavy handed manner that is presently the case.However Homeschoolers Australia is still petitioning the Minister to meet with all homeschooling representative groups in W.A.

The particular family who were in dispute with the Department have had their case reviewed and a minor victory achieved in that they have been appointed new inspectors and a new District Superintendent to oversee the homeschooling. Of course while this creates a precedent and acknowledges the prejudice of the past inspectors and old superintendent the home visit by these new authorities was appallingly intimidating and extremely difficult - the bureaucrats protect their own !

TASMANIA

In the last edition of Home Education magazine John Peacock of 43, Sharland Ave, New Norfolk outlines the Tasmanian Government's Recommendations for Home Education and asks people to comment on them as a matter of urgency. I believe that the change of government to the Liberals should change this option somewhat but if you want more details or to be more actively involved please contact John by sending a self addressed stamped envelope.

Media

On 4th March the crew of Burke's Backyard will be filming for 4 hours at the home of Lynden Jacobi, Len McCarthy and Josh, Erin and Sylvie near Newcastle. They have done lots of preparation for the big day and we are really looking forward to seeing them on the box . On 6th February 1992 the Beirnes had an article in the Telegraph Mirror that was followed up by two radio interviews one really good one with John Stanley on 2UE and one on the morning show on 2UW. In January Valerie Hames had an article in the Northern Districts Times.

DOING IS LEARNING by John Holt

A common and mistaken idea hidden in the word 'learning' is that learning and doing are different kinds of acts. Thus, not many years ago I began to play the cello. I love the instrument, spend many hours a day playing it, work hard at it, and mean someday to play it well. Most people would say that what I am doing is 'learning to play the cello'. Our language gives us no other words to say it. But these words carry into our minds the strange idea that there exist two very different processes: (1) learning to play the cello; and (2) playing the cello. They imply that I will do the first until I have completed it, at which point I will stop the first process and begin the second; in short, that I will go on 'learning to play' until I have 'learned to play', and that then I will begin 'to play'.

Of course, this is nonsense. There are not two processes, but one. We learn to do something by doing it. There is no other way. When we first do something, we probably will not do it well. But if we keep on doing it, have good models to follow and helpful advice if and when we feel we need it, and always do it as well as we can, we will do it better. In time, we may do it very well. This process never ends. The finest musicians, dancers, athletes, surgeons, pilots, or whatever they may be, must constantly practise at their art or craft. Every day the musicians do their scales, the dancers exercise at the barre, and so on. A surgeon I know would from time to time, when not otherwise busy, tie knots in fine surgical gut with one hand without looking, just to keep in practice. In that sense, people never stop 'learning to do' what they know how to do, no matter how well they do it. They must 'learn' every day to do it as well as they can, or they will soon do it less well. The principal flautist of the Boston Symphony under Koussevitsky used to say, 'If I miss a day's practice, I hear the difference; if I miss two days', the conductor hears the difference; if I miss three days', the audience hears the difference'.

THE BABY IS NOT 'GETTING READY'

Educators talk all the time about the 'skills'; reading skills, writing skills, communication skills, even listening skills. It may be true, at the level of words, to say that anyone doing a difficult thing well is using a variety of skills. But this does not mean that the best way to teach a difficult act is to break it into as many separate skills as possible and teach them one by one. As Whitehead said years ago, we cannot separate an act from the skills involved in the act. The baby does not learn to speak by learning the skills of speech and then using them to speak, or to walk by learning the skills of walking and then using them to walk. He learns to speak by speaking, to walk by walking. When he takes his first hesitant steps he is not practising. He is not getting ready. He is not learning how to walk so that later he may walk somewhere. He is walking because he wants to walk, right now. He has thought about it, worked it out in his mind, convinced himself that he knows how to do it and can do it. And now he is going to do it.

We cannot separate skills and acts, and we make a disastrous error when we try. Talking is not a skill, or a collection of skills, but an act, a doing. Behind the act there is a purpose; whether at two or ninety-two, we talk because we have something we want to say, and someone we want to say it to, and because we think or hope our words will make a difference. The baby who begins to talk, long before he makes any sounds that we hear as words, or even understands words, has learned from sharp observation that the sounds that bigger people make with their mouths affect the other things they do. Their talk makes things happen. He may not know exactly what, or how. But he wants to be a part of that talking group of bigger people, wants to make things happen with his voice.

In the same way, walking is not a skill, but an act, with a purpose; the baby wants to move as he sees the bigger people moving, and quickly and skillfully, like them. Reading is not a skill, but an act. The child sees written words all around him; he sees that the older people look at those words, use them, get meaning from them. Those words make things happen. One day (if we give him a chance) he decides that the wants to find out what those words say and mean, and that he can and will find out. At that instant, and with that decision, he begins to read. Not to 'learn to read', but to read. Of course, at first, he doesn't do it well. He may not even be able to read one word. But if he is allowed (as few children are) to continue to do it, to seek out in his own way and for his own reasons the meaning of written words, with only as much help as he may ask for; if this task which he has set himself isn't taken from him and replaced with a lot of fragmented and meaningless tasks invented by someone else and done on their command; if he is not convinced by adults (as many children are) that he is not able to do this task he has set for himself, to figure out what written words say, but he must 'get' reading from a teacher as a patient gets a shot from a doctor; if he is very lucky, and none of these bad things happen, he will be reading well in a short time, perhaps even in a matter of months.

Not long ago I wrote to a number of people who work in reading and reading instruction in various schools of education, to ask if they knew of any research to find out how many children teach themselves to read, and beyond that, how they may have done it. Only one person answered, to say that he had never heard of any such research. Nor have any of the hundreds of educators and reading experts I have asked since. At first it seems strange that reading experts have not asked this question. One might think it would be the first question they would ask. On second thought, it is not strange at all; the answer to this question might be dangerous. It might show once again that our most rapid, efficient, far-reaching, useful, and permanent learning comes from our doing things that we ourselves have decided to do and that in doing such things we often need very little help or none at all.

This article is from Instead of Education (1976 Penguin New York) other Holt books to read are:
1981 Teach Your Own : Delta Publishing Co. Inc. New York
1964 How Children Fail : Penguin New York
1967 How Children Learn : Penguin New York
1969 The Underachieving School :Dell Publishing, New York.
1989 Learning All the Time : Edited writings of John Holt Addison Wesley Publishing Reading U.S.A
1990 A Life Worth Living : Edited letters of John Holt. Addison Wesley Publishing Reading U.S.A
Most are available through Holt Assoc. 2269 Mass Ave Cambridge Mass. 02140 U.S.A

I wonder if homeschoolers are interested to take up John Holt's suggestion regarding children teaching themselves to read & to keep & perhaps share, through the homeschool network an account of your non-reading child teaching themselves to read, how they did it, over what period and anything else you consider relevant.

GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOL ING

Founded by educator John Holt in 1977, each issue of GWS contains:
- Letters from parents and children about their homeschooling challenges, concerns, and successes; living and learning with each other at home and at work.
- Interviews with authors and educators who challenge our assumptions about learning.
- Up-to-date legal and education news that affects homeschoolers.
- Book reviews and resource recommendations.
- Regularly updated Directories of homeschooling families & services, & more! Get your FREE issue now.

WRITE: GWS, Box M10, 2269 Mass. Ave. Cambridge, MA 02140

Publications from Holt Associates

Child's Work, by Nancy Wallace. #1470 $12.95

Earning Our Own Money: Homeschoolers 13 and Under Tell Their Stories. #1578 $4.50

Everyone Is Able: Exploding the Myth of Learning Disabilities. #268 $3.95

Homeschooling in the News - a collection of articles from the popular press. #1562 $6.95

Responding to Children's Writing. #666 $3

Sharing Treasures: Book Reviews by John Holt. #1512 $5.95

Prices do not include postage.

Growing Without Schooling
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HOMEGROWN & HOMESCHOOLED

Raymond Moore

Reprinted from the excellent Mothering Magazine July/ August /September 1990 P.O. Box 532 Mt. Morris Illinois 61054

Dr. Raymond Moore is a developmental psychologist whose research on the family and the school has appeared in virtually every academic journal in the field of Education in the U.S. and abroad. The research of Raymond and his wife Dorothy (a well known reading specialist) has been commended by noted psychologists, psychiatrists, educators, ministers and families.

In 1967, when I left my position as graduate research and programs officer for the US Department of Education, I felt frustrated. The millions of dollars spent on public schooling were only creating new problems. The focus was more on dollars than on children, and those dollars seemed to be confusing things rather than helping them. After several more frustrating years directing an advanced study centre in Chicago, I decided, along with my wife Dorothy and several educational colleagues, to research some areas of education that had been scuttled or ignored. What, for example, was the cost of ignoring the work ethic? Was institutionalising young children a sound educational trend? What was the best timing for school entrance?

We sought guidance from numerous child development and learning specialists: John Bowlby of the World Health Organisation's early childhood program; Joseph Wepman of the University of Chicago; family psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner of Cornell University; early childhood specialists Sheldon White and Burton White of Harvard University; parental attachment researcher Robert Hess of Stanford University; learning authority William Rohwer of the University of California, Berkley; and more than 100 other noted researchers. Although these scholars each held differing beliefs about many aspects of childhood, they all recommended a cautious approach to subjecting the developing nervous system and mind to formal constraints. They also pointed out an abundance of research on the questions we were asking, an astonishing indifference to the findings, and inconsistent recommendations. For example, family psychologists such as Urie Bronfenbrenner, who notes that school attendance by elementary-age students can result in excessive peer dependency, as these children often spend more time with their agemates than with their parents.

We then initiated a series of multi-disciplinary analyses to cross-reference the research on children's senses, brain development, cognition, and coordination. We analysed more than 8,000 studies, 20 of which compared early school entrants with late starters. We also analysed classroom situations involving children who were misbehaving or not learning. As it turned out, many school-related problems were associated with the stress of early academics or out-of-home care.

Our research revealed that all 50 states require children to go to school before they are ready for formal learning. Furthermore, the law requires boys to begin at the same age as girls, even though entrance evaluations show that boys trail behind their female peers by a year or so in terms of general maturity. Studies on sex-role differences among older children reveal a ratio of between 3 and 13 boys to every girl in resource rooms for the "learning impaired" and a ratio of 8 to 1 in programs for the "emotionally impaired".

Our findings indicate that formal schooling constraints are detrimental before the age of 12. Bronfenbrenner warns of the dangers of peer association before fifth or sixth grade. William Rohwer insists that we could save millions of youngsters from academic failure by delaying formal academics until junior high school. And whereas Piaget notes that the average child becomes capable of formal cognitive operations (adult-type perceptions and judgment) between ages 15 and 20, Texas school counsellor David Quine reports that children exposed to full time family life during their early years often reach cognitive maturity between 8 & 12.6 yrs of age.

Despite an early excitement for school, most four-, five- and six-year-old entrants tire of education by third or fourth grade. David Elkind, professor of child studies at Tufts University and author of The Hurried Child, calls these children "burned out". Other researchers suggest that such children are better off waiting until 8, 10, or later to begin formal studies either at home or at school. Children who delay school entrance and subsequently enrol in the same grade as their age-mates quickly surpass early entrants in achievement, behaviour, and sociability.

In the early years, vision, hearing and other cognitive processes are not sufficiently developed to handle the usual academic sanctions. As a result of early schooling, many children's eyes are permanently damaged before age 12. Neither the maturity of the developing nervous system, nor the "balancing" and "lateralizing" of the brain's hemispheres, nor the insulation of nerve pathways can provide a basis for thoughtful learning before age 8. Somewhere in the 8- to 12- age range, most children reach an integrated maturity level (IML), a point at which all these faculties have blossomed.

The IML is a crucial consideration. Some children mature more rapidly in vision, others in hearing, and still others in cognition. The sum total of these abilities, however, requires plenty of time to develop. Aside from an IML evaluation, it is difficult to know just when a child's learning faculties have matured, although parental assessments are often helpful.

Our IML findings coincide with the conclusions of Piaget and others: children, however bright they may be, cannot handle cause-and-effect reasoning in any consistent way at today's school entrance ages. In support of this point Hasler Whitney, a distinguished mathematician with Princeton's Institute for Advanced Studies, cites L.P. Benezet's historic study suggesting that math should not be forced on children before the seventh grade.

According to all parameters under study, readiness for formal learning, especially for boys, should not be assumed before age 12. If early care is needed for a child, the preferred setting is a warm, responsive, home-like environment offering a low child-adult ratio and sound values. And for children between 6 and 12, the optimal choice is an informal, nonacademic home or school setting in which many subjects are available but not enforced.

According to Bronfenbrenner and others, children in the first 10 to 12 years of life are better taught at home; they are also far better socialised at home. Stanford's Albert Bandura observes that dependency on peers for basic values has in recent years moved down to the preschool ages. Contrary to popular belief, however, children are best socialised by parents, not other children. In fact, says Bronfenbrenner, the more children there are in a group, the fewer meaningful contacts each one has.

We found that socialisation creates either a positive or a negative profile, but never a neutral one. Positive sociability is characterised by altruistic and principled attitudes and is firmly linked with the family. It is demonstrated in both the quantity and quality of self-confidence, self-respect, and self-worth deriving from the values and experiences provided by the family at least until the child can reason consistently. In other words, children who work, eat, play, rest, and interact each day with parents more than with peers sense that they are part of the family corporation - that they are needed, wanted, and depended upon. Such children are more often thinkers rather than mere repeaters of other children's thoughts. Independent and self-directed in the acquisition of values and skills, they largely avoid peer dependency.

Negative sociability is characterised by narcissistic, me-first behaviours. It is associated with increased peer group contact and with decreased meaningful parental contact and responsibility experiences in the home during the first 8 to 12 years of life. Early peer influence can lead to an indifference to family values. Children who do not yet understand the whys of parental demands, and who spend more time with their agemates than with their parents, do what comes naturally: they replace their parents with their peers as role models. According to Bronfenbrenner, such children often lose self-respect, optimism, respect for parents, and even trust in their peers.

Homeschooling has proven to be a viable alternative for parents concerned about the influence of schools on their children. Virtually all states have changed their laws or policies through legislative or court actions over the past 20 years. States that have compared homeschools with conventional schools (Alaska, Oregon, Tennessee, and Washington) have found that home education excels significantly.

Students who learn at home generally reflect a high degree of competence both academically and socially. In a study of 50 families (of predominantly lower socioeconomic standing and lower-than-average educational levels) who were taken to court over some aspect of their homeschooling, standardised testing showed that the children scored an average of 80.1 percent, or 30.1 percent above average test scores nationwide. In terms of socialisation, John W. Taylor's national-sample-based study of self-concept found that 77.7 percent of all homeschoolers scored in the top quarter of scores recorded. He also found that excellence in home education has little to do with the parent's educational level.

Although many parents may not know it, they are usually top-notch teachers for children in the first 10 to 12 years - through high school, in fact, if balanced methods are followed. A Smithsonian Institution study of 23 world-class geniuses found that they shared three distinguishing characteristics: warm, loving educationally responsive parents, as well as contact with other nurturing adults; scant involvement with children outside the family; and a great deal of creative freedom to explore their own interests under parental guidance. Blended in balance in the home environment, and nurtured through the sound example of a parent, these ingredients help foster great characters and personalities.

Parents everywhere can provide this sort of nurturing. The key is to balance study, work and service with developmental needs.

Home education offers significant promise to children and to society. It deserves the best research and professional concern we can provide. It also demands patient inquiry and the thoughtful study of available materials. But rest assured, if you are loving and responsive and can read, write, count, and speak clearly, you are ipso facto a master teacher.

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Five good
reasons
for
homeschooling

For most parents the reasons for keeping their children out of school or taking their children out of school is a combination of all of the following:

1. Homeschool parents feel that their children are family business and not the government's- especially when parents are prepared to take full and competent responsibility for them and educate them to SUPERIOR standards.

2. Homeschool parents enjoy being with their children and helping them; they have observed their children from birth growing and learning; they have the utmost confidence in the integrity of their children's learning and their own ability, as parents, to facilitate that learning. They are aware that their children are intelligent, resourceful, skilful, adaptive, inventive and competent. Parents feel they can extend and develop these skills without giving up this task to schools.

3. Homeschooling parents believe they can provide a better academic grounding than the schools can because of the quality, quantity and type of education they provide.

4. Homeschooling parents perceive life for children in school as less than ideal . Schools must conform to parameters as a result of fiscal and administrative limitations. These limitations can contribute to children being hurt educationally, socially, psychologically, mentally, physically and spiritually.

5. Homeschool parents believe that they can provide good, positive socialisation in the form that has traditionally been the province of the family i.e socialisation with the full range of age, skill and socio-economic groups in society (as it will be in the work place). Homeschoolers believe that we all have varying needs for socialisation at different times in our lives, that it cannot be enforced or ensured in the classroom (and that often classroom socialisation is brutal, nasty and not good for children's self esteem) and that adequate social development is something that humans have been well able to cope with, without an institution to enforce it, efficiently since the dawn of time and long before compulsory schooling.

Einstein is quoted as saying

" It is, in fact, nothing short of a miracle that the modern methods of instruction have not yet entirely strangled the holy curiosity of inquiry: for this delicate little plant, aside from stimulation stands mainly in need of freedom. Without this it goes to wrack and ruin without fail. It is a very grave mistake to think that the enjoyment of seeing and searching can be promoted by means of coercion and a sense of duty. To the contrary I believe that it would be possible to rob even a healthy beast of prey of its voraciousness, if it were possible, with the aid of a whip, to force the beast to devour continuously, even when not hungry, especially if the food handed out under such coercion were to be selected accordingly".

ENJOYING LEARNING WHILE LEARNING TO SEW

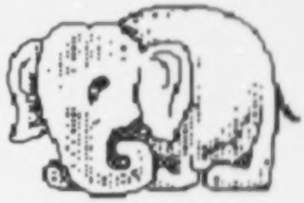
Jo-Anne Beirne

Recently my ten year old daughter, Rebecca and I started sewing classes. It has been a while since I, a born klutz, decided to learn something where I had absolutely no knowledge or experience. However I was enthusiastic and after becoming aware of a lovely teacher in my area decided to give it a go.

Being a 'right from scratch' learner again with absolutely no prior information or experience to fall back on has been really inspiring for me and has forced me to look once again at how some people, like me, must learn. Our teacher, Dale, did not require that we prove that we know how to sew in straight lines or circles, she didn't say you can't do zippers until lesson 9 or "that is too hard for you." In fact at our very first lesson another "pupil" brought striped material to make a circular skirt (a real no no for a beginner apparently) but she has now completed the skirt (it looks great) and we all used her experience to learn lots of valuable hints and techniques along the way.

Part of the joy of working with this teacher is that she is really experienced and totally confident in her own dressmaking skills. She has no "image" or "power" problems. She shows all the time in a myriad of ways that she really enjoys sharing what she knows with others rather than lording it over we less experienced learners. She treats everyone equally as witnessed by my daughter Rebecca who said after lesson two "she treats me like a real person, an adult, Mum". Rebecca, like many homeschooled children, is acutely aware of and often hurt by the condescending way many adults treat children in dance, gym, drama, etc. classes much as if they were second class idiots - not so Dale.

Having attended many classes over the years where everything goes back to basics and it is ages before you can move on to anything interesting it was so refreshing to be told to bring the material and pattern of our choice (Rebecca's was to be necessarily simple) and begin where we wanted to begin.



Plunging in at the deep end like this meant that we would have a finished product that met our needs in a few short weeks (I have now made 6 tracksuits for my two year old in 3 weeks) and, for me, this made the class really worthwhile. At no stage has Dale criticized, ridiculed or even frowned at an individual for a mistake though we have definitely unpicked a lot of things!

Despite being a perfectionist with an incredible volume of high quality work to her name Dale seems to take real pleasure in people achieving what they can do for themselves and is generous to a fault with sharing her expertise on her sewing machine and overlocker. She has never said "you can't do that yet" or expected Rebecca or anyone else would find something too hard for them and as a result we feel really confident with threading bobbins, assessing and fixing tensions and reading patterns (a whole new language for the uninitiated).

Learning sewing myself has reminded me of some important "dos and don'ts" concerning learning, that I always need to keep remembering back home.

1. Enthusiasm is a wonderful spur for learning. Gregory and Stephen have been so inspired by all Rebecca and I have achieved that they have cut out things for themselves (using our small expertise as guide) and sewed and overlocked them quite confidently. When I think of the "pretend" craft done in the schools I am really pleased that they have learnt such valuable skills and have such confidence in three short weeks.

2. You don't need to start at the textbook perceived "beginning" to learn, sometimes jumping right in there is the best introduction anyone needs.

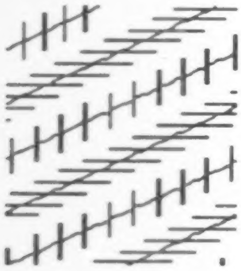
3. It is easier to learn if you are being taught by someone who really enjoys showing you how, and who respects you and your ability to learn.

It also makes me realise that if I had decided to "teach dressmaking" for example, as a part of a learning program this year in our homeschool, I would have attacked it in a totally different way, leaving all of us with the impression that it is a hard, exact and dry occupation when obviously it is quite the opposite.

A NATURAL LEARNING APPROACH TO LEARNING TO SEW

Our environment of learning, preparing for the next lesson, talking about patterns and haunting remnants bins in materials shops has created a real learning environment at our place. We are talking weft and warp, grainlines, clothing styles, denim, baste, selvage, slipstitch, tension, ballpoint needles and widths of seams. I tell myself that this is real maths, language, social studies and science. Not many 11 year old boys, for example have made a tracksuit for their small sister, for many reasons including lack of access and peer group pressure. We have seen that the boys regard sewing as a valuable skill for them as well.

Perhaps the most important lesson I have learned, though, is about "time" and "flexibility". When there is "big learning" going on one must ignore the mess and often most other things and go for it. Virtually a year's school type "pre-programmed" learning has happened here in just a couple of weeks . Sure everything else has been placed on hold but we have achieved a lot in realising that we are masters of our own learning and capable of just about anything to which we set our minds.



A CONVERSATION WITH DAVID & MICKI COLFAX

Reprinted from Home Education Magazine March-April 1991

In Growing Without Schooling #35 (October, 1983) a front page article reprinted from the Boston Globe (August, 1983) told how Grant Colfax, educated at home for eleven years, had recently been accepted for admission by both Yale and Harvard, and would be entering Harvard that fall. The next issue of GWS reprinted a story form the San Francisco Examiner (November, 1983) reporting that Grant was doing well. And in GWS #38 it was reported that the Colfaxes were "just finishing a book on homeschooling."

The book was titled Homeschooling For Excellence, and in it David and Micki told how and why they had educated their four sons at home over fifteen years. They told about the materials they used, the lessons they learned, and yet in the introduction to their book David and Micki cautioned, "Our homeschooling program was not derived from a set of neatly-organised principles that guided our day-to-day activities. We did not attempt to implement a particular educational philosophy, but, rather, attempted to respond to the evolving needs of the children more or less in an ad-hoc fashion. Because of this, our subsequent efforts to reconstruct and rationalise what was largely a trial-and-error process proved to b a rather complex undertaking. We discovered that our deep-seated aversion to educational ideologies in general, and pop ideologies in particular; made it impossible for us to condense a decade and a half of experience into a few easily-apprehended directives which, if followed, would ensure homeschooling success. The educational experience is simply much too complex, too varied, and too rich to be reduced to a neat formula or two, or a set of pat and trendy phrases."

Three of the Colfax sons have gone to Harvard, and David and Micki have been increasingly called upon to share what they have learned. The news media picked up their story and their family has been featured on television, radio, and in hundreds of publications across the nation. Homeschooling conferences have invited David and Micki to speak, and articles and interviews by them have appeared with increasing frequency.

What has the Colfax family been up to since the publication of the book, Homeschooling For Excellence, several years ago?

Grant is now 26, and in his second year at Harvard Medical School, where, in addition to his studies, he's working on a study of health delivery services in black, low-income communities in Boston. We just received a phone call this very morning from our second oldest son, Drew. He graduated from Harvard with high honours in June and is now in Niger, on his way to Mali, where he has a Rockefeller Fellowship to study the impact of famine on tribes in the southern Sahara. Reed, our third boy, is a junior at Harvard and majoring in Afro-American studies. Garth, our 15-year-old, is still at home, where we have a 17-year-old German student, Matti Sander, spending the year with us in our homeschooling program.

The continuation of this conversation is available from Home Education Magazine in a set that includes many of their conversations with noted homeschoolers..

Homeschooling For Excellence is available for US$10.40 (including tax and postage) from Mountain House Press, Box 353, Philo, CA 95466.

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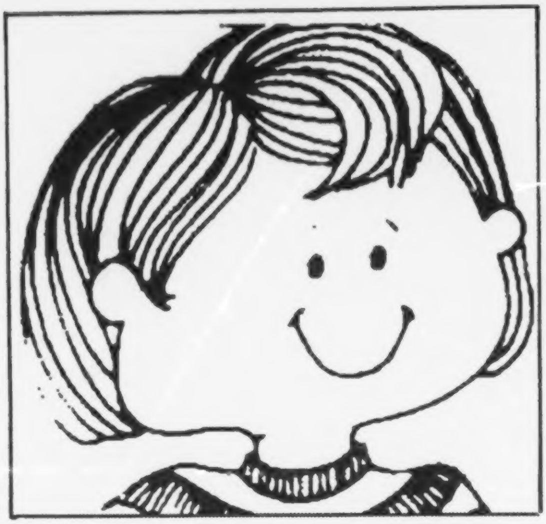
WHAT IS UNSCHOOLING?

Earl Stevens



Earl Stevens is one of my favourite writers from the U.S., I hope you like him too.

"What we want to see is the child in pursuit of knowledge, not knowledge in the pursuit of knowledge in pursuit of the child."
- George Bernard Shaw

It is very satisfying for parents to see their children in pursuit of knowledge. It is natural and healthy for the children, and in the first few years of life this pursuit goes on during every waking hour. But after a few short years most kids go to school. The schools also want to see children in pursuit of knowledge, but the schools want them to pursue mainly the school's knowledge and to devote 12 years of life to doing so.

In his acceptance speech for the New York City Teacher of the Year award, John Gatto said, *"Schools were designed by Horace Mann ... and others to be instruments of the scientific management of a mass population."* In the interests of managing each generation of children the public school curriculum has become a hopelessly flawed attempt to define education and to find a way of delivering that definition to vast numbers of children.

The traditional curriculum assumes that children must be pursued by knowledge because they will never pursue it themselves. It was no doubt noticed that, when given a choice, most children prefer not to do schoolwork. Since, in a school, knowledge is defined as schoolwork, it is easy for educators to conclude that children don't like to acquire knowledge. Thus schooling came to be a method of controlling children and forcing them to do whatever work educators decided was beneficial for them. Most children don't like textbooks, workbooks, quizzes, rote memorisation, and subject schedules. One can discover this, even with polite and devoted children, by asking them if they would like to add more time to their daily study schedule. I feel certain that most will decline the offer.

The work of a school teacher is not the same as that of a homeschooling parent. In most places a teacher is hired to deliver a ready-made, standardised, year-long curriculum to 25 or 30 age-segregatred children who are confined in a building all day. The teacher must use a standard curriculum, not because it is the best approach for encouraging any individual child to learn the things that need to be known, but because it is a convenient way to handle and track large numbers of kids. The school curriculum is understandable only in the context of bringing administrative order out of daily chaos, of giving direction to unruly children and to unpredictable teachers. It is a system that staggers ever onward but never upward, and every morning we read about the results in our newspapers.

But despite the differences between the school environment and the home, many parents begin homeschooling under the impression that homeschooling can be pursued only by following some variant of the traditional public school curriculum in the home. Preoccupied with the idea of "equivalent education", state and local education officials assume that we must share their educational goals and that we homeschool simply because we don't want our kids to be inside their buildings. Textbook and curriculum publishing companies go to great lengths to assure us that we must buy their products if we expect our children to be properly educated. As if this is not enough, there are national, state and local support organisations which have practically adopted the use of the traditional curriculum and the school-in-the-home image of homeschooling as a de facto membership requirement. In the midst of all this, it is very difficult for a new homeschooling family to think that an alternative approach is possible.

One alternative approach is "unschooling," also known as "natural learning" or "experience-based learning."

Unschooling isn't a method, it is a way of looking at children and at life. It encourages

WHAT IS UNSCHOOLING ? by Earl Stevens continued

trust in both parents and children to find the paths that work the best for them without depending on educational institutions, publishing companies, or experts to tell them what to do.

Unschooling does not mean that parents can never teach anything to their children, or that children cannot use a textbook or even a curriculum. Unschooling does not mean that children should learn about life entirely on their own without the help and guidance of their parents. Unschooling does not mean that parents give up active participation in the education and development of their children and simply hope that something odd will happen. Finally, since many unschooling families have definite plans for tertiary education, unschooling does not even mean that kids should never take a course in any kind of school.

Then what is unschooling?

To me a large component of unschooling is grounded in doing real things, not because we hope they will be good for us, but because they are intrinsically fascinating. There is an energy that comes from this that you can't buy with a curriculum. Kids do real things all day long, and in a supportive home environment those things invariably tend toward healthy development and valuable knowledge. It is natural for children to read, write, play with numbers, learn about society, find out about the past, think, wonder, and do all those things that we so unsuccessfully attempt to force upon them in the context of schooling.

While few of us get out of bed in the morning in the mood for a "learning experience," I hope that all of us get up feeling in the mood for life. Children always do so unless they are ill or unless life is made overly tedious and confusing for them. Children don't love to learn, they love to do, and in the act of doing they learn. Sometimes the problem for the parent is that it is rather difficult to determine if anything important is actually going on. It is a little bit like watching a garden grow. No matter how closely we examine the garden it is difficult to verify that anything is happening at that particular moment. But as the season progresses we can see that much has happened, quietly and naturally. Children pursue life, and, in doing so, pursue knowledge. They need adults to trust in the inevitability of this very natural phenomenon and to offer what assistance they can.

Homeschooling is a unique opportunity for each family to do whatever makes sense for the growth and development of their children. If we have a reason for using a curriculum and traditional school materials, we are free to use them. They are not a universally necessary or required component of our homeschooling programs, either educationally or legally. Even educators are beginning to question the planned, year-long curriculum as an outdated, 19th century educational tool. There is no reason that families should be less flexible and innovative than schools.

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HOW DO HOMESCHOOLERS KNOW WHAT TO TEACH ?

by Jo-Anne Beirne

New homeschoolers, teachers and many other people often ask me, "How do homeschoolers know what to teach?" as if schools have a monoploy on the dispensation of knowledge and a casual, non-trained member of the public could not possibly handle such amazing information.

WHAT DO SCHOOLS KNOW ?

We would all do well to remember that many respected educators have said that a lot of what the schools teach is full of value judgements about what some administrators and practitioners thought at some point in time was relevant and important for children to know e.g Latin was once seen as relevant now it is not.

Homeschoolers decide what to teach their children by making these value judgements for themselves. For instance in the Sun Herald 1/3/92 there is an article speaking of the huge increase in anorexia among school girls and the intention of the Education Department Curriculum Co-ordinator to develop materials to help solve this problem. While none of us would dispute the need to help these children it becomes a value judgement as to what time should be allotted to say the "social service" elements of the curriculum and in undertaking these personal development tasks how much academic work is missing out?

As a society we have mostly decided to put curriculum planners/teachers in a position where they make these decisions for us e.g. Society feels that it is important for children to know of the danger of AIDS, or to develop suitable environmental awareness strategies, so time is given in the curriculum ito achieve these goals.

PRIORITIES FOR A HOME EDUCATION CURRICULUM

In the homeschool the parents are the ones to decide the priorities. Some parents may want more time emphasis on the basics, others on history, others on social issues. Obviously it is not essential for the homeschool curriculum to cover an area of no perceived need.

I personally believe it is in fact no big deal if homeschoolers don't teach the majority of the content that they are teaching in schools at all because (a)it is designed for large group compulsory digestion (b) it is bland and designed to be handed out in small doses. We must remember that there is much theoretical and practical discussion going on all the time among educators about whether the school syllabuses are reflective of what society or parents want and if they will even be of any use to the children of the future. (In fact as recognition of this, homeschoolers in N.S.W, are required to fulfill the guidelines in the key learning areas but not to follow school syllabuses.)

Given the structure and administration hierarchy of schools it is just not possible for them to respond to technology, far less a shift in philosophy in less than 20 years. For instance ten years ago a computer was a very expensive and inaccessible piece of technology for schools and it was generally believed that to get ahead in the world most highly skilled people would have to learn enormous amounts about programming. Of course now we have the situation where computers are cheaper, smaller, accessible and much more efficient pieces of technology and it is recognised that while there will always be specialists who will take

up the career of programming most of us can function at peak performance in our selected careers using software already developed and perfected by some whizz bang programmers and we will never really have to write a program ourselves, just as we no longer have to go out and milk the cow to complement our cereal.

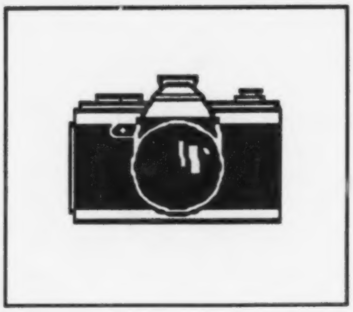
THE CONTENT

A further example lies with information about CFC's, the effects of driftnet fishing, salination of our rivers, the discoveries of Voyager, the effects of garbage polluting our undergound water supplies, the Gulf War etc.We all know it will be a long time before school textbooks, teachers and programs will get around to including real information about these things in school curriculums- and will it be out of date even before it is put in?

Usually before there is a shift in emphasis or content in a syllabus there must be meetings, suggestions, agendas, trials, discussions and finally a syllabus. I am not knocking any of this process, in fact it is essential to ensure the quality of schools' materials. But homeschoolers will know that we can get to it quicker, handle it more efficiently, discard it when inapplicable, pursue it if interesting and important and give a broader more diverse view on most occasions, if we are prepared to be resourceful, do a little research and listen to diverse points of view from a variety of commentators and sources on each issue.

BEING INFORMED

Probably for the first time in history the man in the street has as much opportunity to be informed about a huge range of subjects as the most highly qualified academic. For instance, in the gulf war we had the blow by blow political version from all the leaders and a politically diverse set of commentators; the military version from the mouths of the generals themselves and their allies and detractors; the man in the street's version courtesy of the daring reporters at ground level, the protestors, the wives of the soldiers and everyone else in between.



This is the case in just about every area of learning now. There isn't a subject that hasn't got a book written about it (from ice sculptures to assembling a nuclear bomb) and there is an avalanche of information on every topic imaginable in a huge variety of forms. If you just took notes from the evening news off the radio there would be enough geography, history, maths, language, philosophy, politics, economics and practical jump off points to keep you busy for weeks.

WHO OWNS IT?

Once upon a time the schools were indeed the greatest and often sole repository of educational knowledge both in terms of physical and people resources. Nowadays it is exactly the opposite case. Basically schools are impoverished institutions where the resources that are taken for granted in the home and wider community are thinly spread among a huge number of children and this situation can only get worse. In the 90's it is both cheap and efficient to access the community and all its diverse resources, especially mass media and computers, as a far greater and more up to date repository of knowledge and information .

WHAT TO TEACH ?

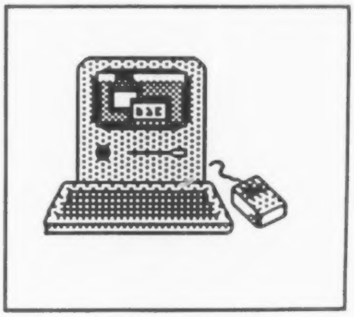
So, what can/do homeschoolers teach ? They are lucky to be able to acces all the traditional sources that are available to schools through textbook and curriculum suppliers and schools programs and then if they are flexible ther is all the rest.

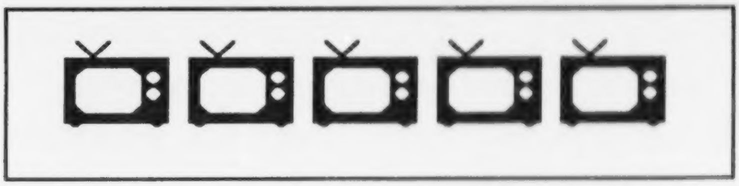
Take for example a hypothetical single parent living in a caravan on a pension with virtually no disposable income, very few resources but a commitment to homeschooling her child.

Resources : Library, church, sport and scoial clubs, local community-people, courses, entertainment, local government services, television and radio.

English:

Listening , discussing, researching and following up news items of interest regularly.+ time and encouragement to read often from innumerable fiction and non-fiction books, periodicals and newspapers from the library, also audio story tapes - don't forget inter-library loan. Explore all sections of the library including history, geography, poetry, biographies - use information obtained as a basis for a good social studies program. Discussions with parent, other adults and friends about the books read, translation into action e.g. a book on bike building could lead to a salvage operation on a bike from the local garbage depot. Lots of oral comprehension as part of this reading and action process. Writing as necessary and as a part of the





community e.g to complain, volunteer or make suggestions for improving local community services, as a penfriend, relative and as part of daily living including paying bills, requesting information, filling in forms etc.

Social Studies: Pick any topic and use the library to explore it in more detail. Local media, genealogical society or historical society to pursue a family history; local history, overview of Australia's history, world history in any century, follow a theme such as fashion, transport or statesmen through an historical period. Use local people, the local council and information from State government departments to concern yourself with your community in the area of roads, tourism, industry, tree planting; water supply, retail trades, careers. Local old people who might want jobs done in exchange for information or skills they have to share (art, craft, woodwork); Pamphlets from any number of government , private (B.H.P.) etc. and travel agencies are a good starting point for finding things out of interest in our world . Just look at where you live "How are caravans made? How much do they cost? What are rivets? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this home compared to others e.g igloos, teepees, mudbrick, tents, brick, etc..............

Maths: Most people can easily get a Maths book at a garage sale but even without a textbook there is the maths of distances and time measurement, temperature, latitudes and longtitudes, wind speeds, tides, barometric pressure, magnification, weights, cooking, shopping, addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, the budget of the family, local council and the country's budget , tax forms, cheque books, bank accounts, comparisons of interest and other benefits from a range of financial institutions, the maths of the social security system, T.V programs/advertisements timetabling, bills and efficient management of funds, the stock exchange, scores, tables, charts etc.

Science: Geology: collect / compare/swap rocks, read about and identify them, find out about the geological formation of the local area and Australia, visit appropriate museums, write to private collectors and ask to see their collections, join an appropriate club of enthusiasts. Astronomy: watch the sky, read, construct star charts, compare them, join clubs, go to the University open days for budding astronomers, keep newspaper clips of the most up to date findings. Botanists have everything around them to observe from live to dead plant specimens in any environment, progress to record, experiments to think about and try, predators to assess, drawings to make, root systems and reproduction to consider. There are any number of museums and volunteer bush guides and environmental organisations who exchange enthusiastic labour for high quality expert information about habitats, animals etc. Obviously there is heaps more in every science area and none of this requires expensive equipment or resources just ingenuity.

The same sorts of things apply for creative and physical arts. If you want music lessons badly enough you will be creative enough to advertise in the library or on notice boards to find someone or something you can exchange for this skill. I know some kids who have made valuable contacts through Meals on Wheels - housebound people haven't usually lost their faculties only their mobility. No-one says you have to be taught art you can practice your drawing and use books for more ideas, apprentices in the studios of the old Masters spent hours every day copying their masters to perfect their own skills.

Committed Christians can and will use every subject area to incorporate and expand on the teachings and writings of their church.

CREATIVITY & RESOURCEFULNESS

Being creative and resourceful is what a person on limited funds has to do to give their child an education, it is my experience that, in the main they are precisely that. If we encourage people to think of themselves as "power brokers" for their own and their children's education then we will undoubtedly have a better educated society that doesn't equate school with education. Perhaps compared to those of us who tend to just open up a textbook and ask the kids to do what schools and educators have drummed into us is "learning", the less well off can give their children an active, involved, resourceful and useful education.

Lots of researchers have problems with schools too !!!

When the opportunity arises for a large group of homeschooling parents to discuss the reasons why they homeschool the topic of 'schools' is usually a key one. For despite the fact that most people homeschool for very positive reasons the reality is that the 'awfulness' of schools has helped to create those positive reasons.

Schools are so socially and morally accepted in our society that more often than not home educators are made to feel guilty for citing our own school experiences of elitism, authoritarianism, classism, violence, racism, sexism and boredom as reasons for homeschooling. So, it is with much delight that I present these quotes gathered together by Anna Adams and myself to support homeschoolers confident belief that schools are not all they are cracked up to be.

POSTMAN & WEINGARTNER (1971):

"Passive acceptance is a more desirable response to ideas than active criticism.
Discovering knowledge is beyond the power of students and is, in any case, none of their business.
Recall is the highest form of intellectual achievement, and the collection of unrelated 'facts' is the goal of education.
The voice of authority is to be trusted and valued more than independent judgement.
One's own ideas and those of one's classmates are inconsequential.
Feelings are irrelevant in education.
There is always a single, unambiguous Right Answer to a question.
English is not history and history is not science and science is not art and art is not music, and art and music are minor subjects and english, history and science major subjects, and a subject is something you take and, when you have taken it, you have 'had' it and if you have 'had' it, you are immune and need not take it again".

HUMPHREYS & NEWCOMBE (1975 School's Out)

"The curriculum, day in and day out, oppresses children. They are forced to learn a mass of facts, without any real understanding of why these particular facts are important in their own world. They even query whether it is their world that they are learning about at all. The necessary ingredients of unquestioning acceptance and docility are slowly mixed into the brew of inquisitive effervescent children in giant assembly lines across the nation".

MUSGROVE (1969 Society and the Teachers Role) spoke of curriculum as being "an elaborate device for filling the time available"

MACDONALD (1977- The Curriculum and Cultural Development) said "curriculum is a social construction in which the selection and organisation of knowledge into the timetable of the school is a result of a choice from possible alternatives".

CONNELL et al. (Making the Difference 1982) documents aspects of what they call the "unending guerrilla war aspect of classroom life".

WERTHMAN (1977)
in his study of a group of 'delinquent students' showed that they carefully evaluated the teacher's claim to authority and this determined the nature of their classroom behaviour.

HENRY (1988 p. 54) says " that this (Werthman's) research and other research suggests that so-called delinquent students are 'constructed' during schooling".

HENRY, KNIGHT. LINGARD & TAYLOR (1988 Understanding Schooling) say "Research on primary school teachers shows that they demonstrate a preference for males, and that they interact more with boys and value male ideas more highly (Delamont, 1980; Evans, 1982; Spender, 1982). Work in secondary schools also shows that both male and female teachers give more attention to boys than girls in the classroom...... two thirds of classroom time spent with boys." Based on research from Fitzgerald, 1976; Meade,1978; Branson and Miller, 1979; Edgar,1980 to back up their claim Henry, Knight, Lingard and Taylor also write"Cultural and class factors also influence how well children do at school and there is a wealth of Australian evidence that shows that despite the expansion of mass education in the secondary area there are still gross inequalities in educational outcomes which are reflected by social class inequalities in occupational qualifications, income and wealth".

RESEARCH ABOUT SCHOOLS

continued

SHANE & SHANE (Learning For Tomorrow- edited by Alvin Toffler 1974 p. 195) both Professors of Education at Indiana University suggest that the future education of our young children should abolish age-segregation altogether, because after 100 years of searching "no psychologically desirable or reliable ways have been found to subgroup children in a given grade. To attain a good climate for learning, the graded-school concept must be abandoned and age-grouping replaced by short-term or ad-hoc groupings built around child interests, purposes, tasks, discussions and comparable activities."

University of Chicago Adolescent Project reported in Gifted Children's Monthly 1988 that half of all gifted high school students quit pursuing their special ability area while in school. Csikszentmihalyi saw this phenomenon as a product of stress and boredom and blamed school's adherence to inflexible blocks of instructional time for part of the problem. He suggests that "a linear presentation of materials in most classrooms works against capturing student interest and enhancing their intrinsic motivation".

PARTINGTON (What do our Children Know ? 1988) "It is true that there is no unanimity as to what students should achieve in education and there never will be. Education is a highly contested and necessarily contestable concept. In a totalitarian system there might be the appearance of unanimity but this would only indicate the suppression of dissenting opinions."

HOW TO MEASURE THE 'REAL' ACHIEVEMENTS OF SCHOOLS ?

Anna Adams actually developed a set of very simple 'reality questions' that we would both love to challenge individual schools and schooling as a whole to answer. You could undoubtedly think of may more.

1. At the various grade levels, how many children are reading below grade level?

2. At the various grade levels how many children are reading at least two years ahead of grade level?

3. Of the children reading below grade level two years ago, how many are now reading at grade level or better now? In other words how effective are schools at improving the reading of those students who are having trouble?

4. At each grade level, how many students have been designated as having "learning disabilities", "emotional disturbances", "hyperkinetic or hyperactive" dispositions ?

5. Of the children so designated two years ago, how many of them are freed of these problems now? In other words how successful are schools in dealing with and overcoming these problems?

6. How does the Education Ministry or Department assess whether special programs for girls, Aborigines, ethnic groups or "working class" or any other group deemed to be educationally disadvantaged, actually reduce these disadvantages? In other words how efficiently do schools use their resources ?

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HANDMADE BY HOMESCHOOLERS
WRITE FOR CATALOGUE
Handmade in Australia

House cleaning and Homeschooling

by Debbie Westheimer

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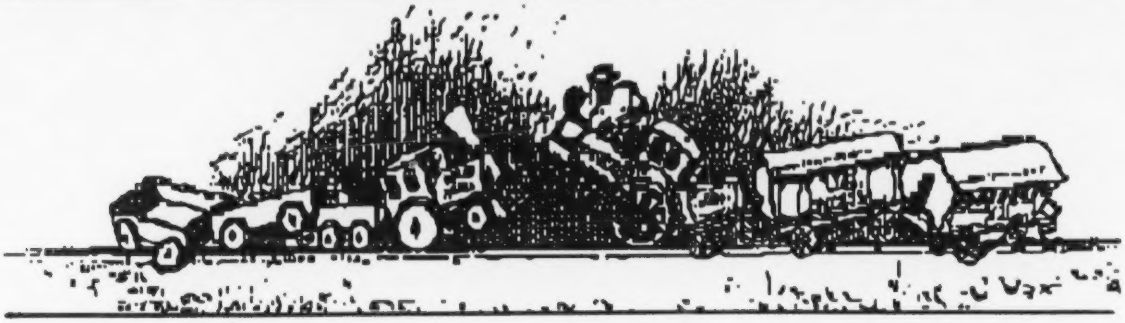

I'm on my hands and knees in my wardrobe. My hands are filled with things that should not be there: coins, a checker piece and a piece of foam rubber. Boots and shoes are piled on top of sandals and slippers. I pull out all those craft projects that I started but never finished. By removing the crafts, I have a place for the boots. If I'm lucky I might even find the floor! What does this cleaning have to do with homeschooling? It has everything to do with my sanity and something to do with providing an orderly environment for our family. I have found that the more order there is in our living space, the more efficiently our time is spent on projects that have meaning for us. If I'm preparing tomatoes for sauce, I want to spend as little time as possible looking for the squeezer and the canning equipment. When everything has a home and finds its way back when not in use, our household seems to run more smoothly.

I have lived in my house for 11 years now. Out of these, the last three have been homeschooling years. One would think that by this time we might have some sort of system that would help us keep our home neat and clean. We are working at it. What is true for us is that house cleaning has taken on more importance since we have decided to school at home. After all, we are spending much more time in our home. Even though our educational philosophy allows us to view our schooling as a never ending cycle, we do mark a beginning and an end to our school year. We do this partly to complement Dick's schedule as a public school teacher. We seem to do the same at home, having very different expectations during holidays than at other times of the year. Just as Dick spends time in his classroom before kids join him, we prepare our home for a new year as well. We have begun a tradition called the big purge.

We begin sometime in January, and our goal is to finish by Australia Day. The big purge involves opening every drawer, every cupboard and every cabinet in the whole house. It is a monumental task for us, partly because we aren't as good as we should be at keeping up with things the rest of the year. Nonetheless, in January this purging becomes a family affair. Even my four year old daughter can help decide what stays in the house and what goes to our Salvation Army pile. She can choose between stuffed animals that have meaning to her and those that have been sitting unloved for nine months.

We started in storage. Do we really need to keep those boxes of wool that we thought might be braided into rugs? Do we really need to keep the canteen set that I used as a Girl Guide? The reality is that I probably won't braid rugs for a long time, long enough that the wool won't be missed. And the canteen set is not likely to be used in the near future, either. But my Beatles lunch box and my original Barbies have this place in my heart that allows them to pass inspection. There is a place for the sentimental and otherwise memorable items. There are papers to file in the office, bins of toys to sort through in the play room, books to dust and organise in the hallway, and tools to put in order in the workshop. In the dining room, we have a drawer for thin markers, crayons, thick markers, pens and pencils and rubber stamp sets. There is a place for rubber bands, staples, and mistake stickers. All of these small containers are dumped out, sorted through and put back in order. During the year, our construction sheet paper mixes in with our notebook paper. Our recycled scrap paper mixes in with our solid white paper. The mess gets pulled out and stacked in neat piles, ready to be used by all. It's a wonderful feeling to prepare our home in such a way.

What next? We do our big purge once a year. We do small scale purges throughout the year, maybe every three months. As for the daily pickups and the weekly dustings, sweepings, and moppings, we have come up with a system we call "What Next?" What this name implies is that after one is finished with the room that one is responsible for, an out loud yell will follow: "What Next?" to see what else needs to be done. None of us are done until all of us are done. Our bedrooms are on the second floor of our home. We do this floor first, sometimes before breakfast, sometimes after. Basically, this is the time to make our beds, make sure that clothing is properly taken care of and bins and drawers are in order. Because we spend little of our waking hours on the second floor, it doesn't take us long to tidy on this level. The first floor demands more of our time. This is partly because there are more rooms here and partly because we spend our waking time here. Also, we have all developed some bad habits. We don't put things away properly when we are done using them. If we did, there would be no such thing as "What Next?" How and when do we do this straightening?

During the school year when Dick works out of the home, we save this level for his involvement. We have found that we all feel better about pick up if we do it together. My ten year old will put on some music and off we go to tidy. When we first began this routine, we had a chart with all the different rooms printed down the left side of the page, and with the seven days of the week printed at the top. Now that we have been doing this for over a year, we rarely pull out the chart. Rather we tend to yell out our preferences. What do we do when two people want to do the same room? Usually we let the person on lunch duty (this rotates between the three kids) choose first. Occasionally we opt for teamwork. Two people might work together to do four rooms. During the summer months, with extra farm demands, the house takes on less priority. We do not keep up with this routine on a daily basis. When we do finally tend to the inside, we don't necessarily wait for evening hours. Dick is home full time with us then, so we can attack our space any time.

So what is expected? Basically "What Next?" is the time to put things away in their proper home. This is the time to organise those blocks in the hallway, to fold the quilts on the couch, to sort through the mail that accumulates on the sideboard. High use rooms also get a daily sweeping. Our dining room gets swept after each meal. We also expect for workers to be focused with their tasks. If we have dawdlers, we will bring in the stopwatch and ask for that person to look around his/her space to estimate how much time it will take to straighten. After a reasonable time is agreed upon, we set the clock. This incentive is helpful and challenging. There are times (more with our near four year old than with the older guys) when someone will simply choose not to work efficiently. Once Dick or I recognizes that we don't have a complete work force, we ask if the person intends to tidy or would they rather sit out while we do our "What Next?" Sitting out does not mean that they can sit on the couch with a book in their hand. Sitting out is just sitting for as long as it takes for the rest of us to finish. (An average time is thirty minutes.) It is rare that someone decides to just sit, but occasionally it does happen.

We have tried lots of different ways to keep up with the house cleaning, including hiring help. We have read books about the subject. Of all the systems that we have read about and tried, our current method is by far the most rewarding.

I can't say that our cleaning is the highlight of our home life. It is a necessary part of our homelife and an integral part of our home school. I am proud of my ten year old who can wash dishes and mop a floor. I am proud of my seven year old who can stick to a task from start to finish. I am proud of my four year old who can separate light and dark laundry and pour a cup of soap into the washer. These daily living chores are the backbone to taking care of one's self and one's environment. We believe our children will come away from their home schooling years with a sense of these, as well as other, responsibilities.

OTHER READING

Sidetracked Home Executives by Peggy Jones and Pam Young, Warner Books, 1981

Clutter's Last Stand by Don Aslett, Writer's Digest Books, 1984 (Holt Associates)

cently included woodstove operation, winter heating, the French Revolution, Thomas Paine and English literature! Woven into the fabric of our discussions are our priorities, beliefs and views of the world. It is essential, however, for the sharing to go both ways. If it bothers you for your child to express an idea you disagree with your effectiveness as a mentor will be reduced. The more you can discuss even controversial topics (and teens do love controversy) as equals in a reasonable way, the more you will be respected. If necessary, you may need to agree to disagree. In the long run you will have more impact on the beliefs and behaviors of youth when you are perceived as "reasonable" rather than "authoritarian."

One of the hardest jobs as a parent is allowing a child the freedom to fail; the second hardest job may be picking up the pieces without the "I told you so." As a homeschooling parent mentor I believe that both behaviors are essential. Of course, I don't "set anyone up" to fail, or neglect my role as a guide and advisor by not discussing potential pitfalls. On the contrary, a good mentorship allows you to discuss possible problems without your child feeling like "she's trying to tell me what to do again." But one way we grow and learn our limits is by pushing them. This by necessity includes "failure." Fortunately most failures are not permanent or life threatening. You can't let a 3-year-old run into the street, but you can let a 16-year-old procrastinator miss a newsletter deadline, for example. Once he has had to face his club and explain why there is no newsletter he'll be less likely to put it off again than if you spent 30 hours nagging or helped him to meet the deadline at the last minute.

Since we developed the mentoring method of homeschooling I've proven to my somewhat skeptical spouse (the ex-teacher, remember) my contention that most children, given a stimulating environment, a little guidance, and an active, involved, intelligent family, can't help but learn!

The side effects of the mentoring method have done wonders to mitigate possible homeschool burnout, as well. Since my kids are increasingly responsible for their own learning I spend less time as a "school slave driver." This reduces my stress level as well as allowing more time for my activities and learning. This, again, stimulates everyone else. And with discussions and practical application as major learning tools, we learn while we eat, garden, drive, work, and live!

Most significant, though, is that mentoring builds the framework for a strong and healthy adult relationship with your growing teens. It will last through their leaving home and helps them on their way to responsible, independent adulthood. And, after all, isn't that what homeschooling is really all about?

HEM

The article 'Mentoring' by Jj Fallick is reprinted from Home Education Magazine P.O. Box 1083 Tonasket WA 98855

Mothering is one of my favourite magazines about people, families, children and education. The publisher Peggy O'Mara has written some beautiful articles. (see page 27) I highly recommend this publication.

MOTHERING

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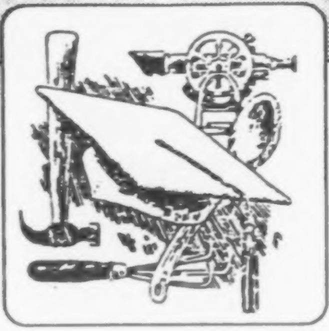

Jj Fallick

The Mentoring Method

Mentoring is a popular concept today. In some business circles it has replaced networking, and in the formal structure of the city government of Spokane, Washington, there is now an official mentorship program. Mentorship is not just a fad, but an excellent method of teaching and learning. "Advisor" might be a loose synonym, but the connotation of a mentorship involves much more.

In Greek legend, the original Mentor, trusted friend of Odysseus, became responsible for the education of Odysseus' son, Telemachus, when the father departed for Troy. Telemachus is the central figure in the first four books of Homer's epic, *The Odyssey*.

Eric Large, 16, sought out our family as mentors in independent rural living. He says, "A mentor and student have much more of a chance if they meet on equal ground. It is a relationship, not a matter of simply learning facts but a way of thinking, a way of teaching a student to think." He also observes that the success of a mentorship "depends on how much trust you go in with." Within one's own family, developing a mentor relationship may be difficult. The transition from an authoritarian "because I said so" attitude to the openness and acceptance of your child as an independent person whom you meet on equal ground isn't always easy. In the long run, though, it is always worthwhile.

In the homeschooling context, we begin the transition by letting our children choose their own books and learning materials as soon as they want to do so. We guide their selection of books appropriate to their ability with discussion, not manipulation or persuasion. By the time they are in their teens, our daughters even select their own courses of study. They refer to state requirements, and consider their own interests, needs, skills, and weaknesses. If you have not experienced such a program, it will probably surprise you that they study subjects they don't like or do poorly in without being pushed! Mentoring, in the context of daily life, shows them the real need to be able to spell, cypher, read, or whatever they might like to avoid. The kids that I see are usually very aware of their weaknesses, and I think they are more likely to tackle self-improvement when it is not forced on them, especially if they can do it in a gentle, supportive atmosphere.

That's where you, as mentor, come in! You may get asked, "How do I calculate this?" or "What's the best way to learn to spell decently?" or your teen may cry on your shoulder over a fault, perceived or real. When you have developed the trusting, open relationship essential to mentoring, these questions and sharing of emotions come more easily. Your teens won't be put off by unexpected lectures or fault-finding that sour so much parent-teen communication. The mentor's job is not to solve his student's problem, but to help the student find his own solution. In the case of the math problem, this may require actual teaching. The spelling question would probably generate a discussion of learning styles. In the last case, your child is probably not looking as much for advice as for an empathic ear. All of these situations come up regularly when you mentor.

When you are called upon for actual instruction try to answer *just* what you are asked and leave *lots* of room for more student-initiated questions. Nothing can turn kids off faster than a lecture! My daughters sometimes complain about their dad, an ex-classroom teacher, in this regard. "He just keeps telling you more than you ever wanted to know or even thought there *was* to know," says Amy. When we can turn a potential lecture into one of our wide-ranging, free-for-all discussions the kids learn much more. These conversations, a cornerstone of our homeschooling, often prolong dinner or bedtime. Months later, questions and comments by even the youngest children prove that the discussions are not only retained but also understood and integrated with other knowledge. Even better learning takes place when we can actually use what we talk about in a project. As Eric says, "Actual experience is better than just reading about something in a book or having a teacher talk at you about it."

Two of my goals as a homeschooler are to instill a life-long love of learning and to foster self-motivation. Knowing how he learns, and what works for others helps a student to make good use of his time, and to be able to learn under most conditions even when they don't fit his preferred learning style. Apparently I'm not the only one who thinks this is important. On a questionnaire she completed during her graduation from home school my daughter, Katrina, was asked the most significant thing she learned while homeschooling. Her answer included "self-motivation and learning theory."

A good mentor relationship is a very personal, close one that involves much sharing. Certainly such a relationship will go beyond any original single purpose. In the cases of Eric and Rebecca, who both came to learn rural life skills, this is true. Discussions with Rebecca have re-

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Jj Fallick is a freelance writer and homeschooling mother living near Davenport, Washington.

Like a Weaning

Peggy O'Mara

I'd like to write about babies because I know that many of you have babies, but I don't. I have teens, and I want to scream. I think it may have to do with being short. Maybe if I were a taller parent . . . . Maybe if I were a married parent . . . Maybe if. . . . Where have we gotten the idea that we can control human beings? Why do we believe our virtue and good intentions can create perfect children? Which one of us was a perfect child? One analyst I know says she sees more "perfect children" in her chair than those who raised hell.

Something about parenting teens is reminiscent of the early years of parenting. Things are all askew, and you feel as if you've arrived in a foreign land where you certainly don't know the territory and haven't yet learned the language. The things that used to work don't work anymore, and you suddenly realize that you got more than you bargained for. And, no one talks about it. Not really. Not the scary stuff. We're all afraid it might be our fault.

When they are babies, you can keep their outrageous behavior to yourself. You don't have to tell anyone that your daughter cut her hair with pinking shears and then shut her baby brother up in the toy chest. And you don't have to mention what you did when you found out. The behavior of teens is a much more public affair.

Your friends see your teens downtown in black, playing cool with cigarettes. Your coworkers report on your teens' driving prowess. Other parents form alliances to report teen drug and alcohol transgressions. Your daughter's friend's mother calls in the middle of the night to say that someone you thought you knew very well has just climbed out of her window. The authorities arrest teens for shoplifting just to give them a taste of jail. Therapist friends suggest addiction counseling for things you suspect may just be normal experimentation. You wonder if in this self-obsessed, antiseptic society, teens have a right to experiment anymore. You wonder about teen bashing. But you're not sure. And you worry.

Then you look at your teens. These are the same sweet children you have loved and trusted over the years. The ones you have intimate communication with. The ones you have, in fact, learned relationship with. You have always trusted them. You have spent years building trust with them. Do you stop trusting them now because the temptations are greater, the risks riskier? Can you afford to let them learn through their own experience, the way you learned, the way anything important is learned when the risks are so great and when you don't have any other choice anyway?

When they were little, you worried about them falling into the swimming pool. You breathed a sigh of relief when they all learned to swim. Now you worry about the whole ocean. There are cars. New Mexico has the highest rate of drunken driving in the country. Car accidents are the leading cause of death among teens. There are cigarettes. You wonder about a society that sells something more addictive than heroin in vending machines. You worry about drugs. Are they really available in schoolyards? You worry about food. How can anyone live long on Hershey's Kisses, orange soda, and potato chips? Why don't they remember to take their vitamins? No wonder they're coughing.

I talked recently to a woman whose name you would know. She spoke in hushed tones about her marriage and her teens. The whole thing was going to hell in a handbasket, but she was not specific. I'm sure she was afraid to tell me, Ms. Perfect Parent, what was really happening. I was dying to tell her what was really happening here. Like in the early days of parenting, we keep our pain and confusion to ourselves, fearing that confiding in others will confirm our fears of our own inadequacy.

It helps me to talk to other parents of teens, and especially to talk to parents of grown children. I cried with relief over an article by Eda LeShan about little monsters who grow up to be rabbis and attorneys. I was ecstatic when my neighbor told me about the five foreign cars his grown daughter had wrecked when she was a teen. And I laughed uproariously when this same neighbor described the time he came upon his teenage son smoking and playing pinball in a local convenience store. My neighbor calmly walked over to him and had a casual conversation while his son hid the burning cigarette in his pocket. I feel comforted when I hear that passive-aggressive and manic-depressive are normal in the teen years. My favorite reassurance is that the closer you've been with your child, the harder the teen years are. I wouldn't have believed that earlier, when I could still control their behavior, but it makes sense now.

It makes sense now because I understand what is happening. The teen years are like a weaning. Although we still love these children as we did when we held them in our arms, *they must leave us.* And for them to leave us with their self-esteem intact, they must sometimes fight their way out. At eight or nine, they assure us that they will live with us forever—or at most, build their own house right next door to ours. We are all relieved. This, however, is not what is best for them. They must sometimes fight their way out.

This summer I will have three teenagers. Send money, flowers, condolences. Pray that I don't take to drink. I've taught them excellent boundaries and now they are using them against me. They've caught me at my game. They are better at it than I am. They challenge me to trust them. And trust is, after all, all that I have.

I have raised my children to have certain values, and now it is time for them to test and make them their own. I have tried to shield them from society; they want to jump in feetfirst. And yet, I hold on tight. Unlike some parents who seem to abandon their children once they become teens and attribute to them more worldly experience than they could have, I do not. I am only the bumper rails, though. They are now in the driver's seat, and the air is low in the tires, and they have little experience with snow and ice, and they are in the hands of God.

These are the same teens who sometimes still want to get in bed with me after a bad illness or a stressful week. The same teens who demonstrate against the war in the Middle East and in support of higher teacher salaries. The same teens who work weekly with the homeless. The same teens who have intense loyalty to their friends and compassionate tolerance of intolerant adults. The same teens who hold a baby with the tenderness of Mother Teresa.

I am on a roller coaster of my own creation. I have no choice but to hold on. I am a parent of teens, and I do not know the way. They bring out the worst in me and have seen my best. All else that has come before in our relationship—the sleepless nights, the hospital stays, the tantrums, and the rocking chair—has prepared me for this trusting. For no one else would I hang on so tightly with one hand while I loosen the grip of my longing with the other.

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This article is reprinted from Growing Without Schooling (G.W.S.) Issue 85. I strongly recommend this journal for all those people who like to read about the personal experiences of homeschooling parents and children over a broad educational, experiential and philosophical range.

Einstein the Autodidact

From a manuscript by Howard R. Bernstein called "The Holy Curiosity of Inquiry': Albert Einstein as Student and Educator:

... It may well be fair to say that at least for Einstein, formal schooling had little to do with thinking and learning ... I do not mean to say, however, that Einstein learned nothing valuable at school, or that his suffering there was unalleviated. Indeed he had congenial memories of at least one teacher at the Gymnasium, and very good feelings in general about his year at Aarau, Switzerland. The point is simply that retrospectively, Einstein's learning in class struck him as neither fundamental nor inspirational, neither deep nor lasting. Rather, his intellectually formative moments, those which he recalled to have made a "deep and lasting impression," were had either outside, or in spite of, schools.

In his "obituary" [near the end of his life Einstein wrote an autobiography which he jokingly called his obituary] Einstein referred to yet another crucial educational experience, "a second wonder," he wrote, "of a totally different nature: in a little book dealing with Euclidian plane geometry..." This was the famous *heilige Geometrie-Buchlein* (holy geometry booklet) which came his way, probably because he asked his parents for it, when he was twelve. But even before Albert confronted "the sacred text," he was mathematically engaged. And this is because in spite of a mathematically impoverished school environment, his home environment, in Seymour Papert's expression, was enriched by the presence of "mathematics speaking adults." The idea here is that children, like the young Einstein, are encouraged and motivated by their own desire for competence and participation in grown-up life to acquire the language(s) that is/are spoken in the home. When mathematics, for example, is an inextricable feature of the child's early environment, there is vanishingly little chance of it appearing alien and "dissociated" in their later experience. Such children are often highly successful in school mathematics in spite of poor instruction and curriculum design. In young Albert's case, Uncle Jakob, his father's business partner and engineer, reinforced the boy's aptitude for problem solving by presenting him with challenging mind twisters from time to time. ... It was this Uncle Jakob who initiated him into the secret of the Pythagorean theorem, which Einstein remembered to have set about to prove for himself "on the basis of the similarity of triangles." This feat young Albert accomplished before he was exposed to plane geometry as a formal study. ...

... By the time he was fourteen, Einstein had taught himself calculus, in all probability from H.B. Lubsen's textbooks, which happen to bear Uncle Jakob's signature on the flyleaf. This uncle, of whom we have already heard, was the same person who described algebra as "a calculus of indolence." When you don't know a quantity, he explained to his apt pupil, all you have to do is hold its place with an x. The idea is to treat it as though you know it, only to determine it for real later on. This explanation of algebra no doubt pleased young Albert, who soon found himself at home with equations that would have mystified classmates still at sea with decimals. My suspicion is that Jakob presented mathematics as a rewarding kind of play, an entertainment that, whatever else it might be, was pre-eminently fun. Einstein's home environment was congenial for hunting x's and proving theorems in novel ways. The game was to do it without the book, that is to say, to figure it out oneself, and therefore to savor the joy of one's own discovery. Uncle Jakob wasn't a professional teacher, but more important, he was an interested, sympathetic adult who was able to communicate his enthusiasm, no doubt, by example.

... I have made the observation that Einstein was an autodidact, literally that he was self-taught. Not only did the mathematics culture available to him at home prepare him to acquire school arithmetic without difficulty, but he also seems to have been encouraged to build on that foundation as *he*, and not someone else, teacher or other adult, saw fit. That the young Einstein learned directly from books and creative play, rather than formally, by verbal instruction in a place called school, is not, to my mind, especially illuminating. What is important is that he seems, early on, to have been in control of his learning to an astonishing degree. He asked for books; he got them. He asked questions, his own questions, and made progress finding the answers for himself. This is very unusual and very noteworthy indeed. In education, Einstein benefited from a truly extraordinary latitude for self-determination. This liberty was crucial for his own development and for his ideas about education later on. My guess is that Einstein's appreciation for freedom, together with his remarkable degree of self-reliance, had their beginnings in the home environment of his childhood.

What is important is that he seems, early on, to have been in control of his learning to an astonishing degree.

Of course even Einstein's childhood was not entirely devoid of coercion. Middle class family life in Munich at the end of the 19th century tended to be rigidly structured, hierarchical and patriarchal. Even the gifted and independent young Einstein was obliged to perform solid middle class rituals, which, with the musically talented mother that he had, included lessons on the violin. As it happens, his career as a "fiddler" (Einstein's expression) richly illustrates the kind of learner he was. For Albert was consigned to violin lessons at the age of six, with indifferent success at best. As he tells the story, "I really began to learn only when I was 13 years old, mainly after I had fallen in love with Mozart's sonatas. The attempt to reproduce to some extent, their artistic content and singular grace compelled me to improve my technique, which improvement I obtained from these sonatas without practicing systematically." By common consensus Einstein developed into a fairly skillful amateur violinist. It may well be that that learning the violin mirrors learning mathematics, or simply learning in general. As long as Albert mechanically executed the scales and compelled his fingers joylessly to find their positions on the strings, his progress stagnated. Apparently, Einstein learned, not by practicing but by playing, in effect, not by preparing to make music but by making it.

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BOARD OF STUDIES
NEW SOUTH WALES

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North Sydney 2060

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North Sydney 2059
NSW Australia

Fax (02) 955 35[illegible]
Tel (02) 925 8111

Ms J Beirne
Homeschoolers Australia Pty Ltd
PO Box 420
Kellyville 2153

Our reference
2128 CF:MS

Your reference

Dear Ms Beirne

I refer to your letter dated 10 January 1992 concerning access of Home Schoolers to the awards of the School Certificate and Higher School Certificate. I apologise for the delay in replying.

The Board of Studies considered the issue of access of Home Schoolers to the award of the Higher School Certificate at its meeting on 23 December 1991 and decided that Home Schooling candidates may enrol in an accredited or recognised school for the whole of Year 12 and enter for the Higher School Certificate provided that the principal certifies that all assessment requirements and outcomes of the courses selected have been met. The Board also confirmed its rule that students who undertake the TAFE one year Higher School Certificate course must be 19 years of age.

For a student to be eligible for the Higher School Certificate as a school student, it would normally be necessary for him/her to have the School Certificate or its equivalent and to undertake the full two year HSC program. It may be possible for a small number of students to gain accelerated status by compacting the two years' study normally required for Higher School Certificate study into one year. To do so, the student concerned would need to enrol in Year 11 and the principal of the school would apply to the Board for accelerated status following the school's assessment of the student's ability.

Home schoolers who do not wish to enrol in any accredited or recognised school and who wish to enter the Higher School Certificate examinations may do so as self tuition candidates, sitting for a maximum of 9 units and receiving a result notice only.

While the issue of the Home Schoolers' eligibility for the award of the School Certificate was not directly discussed at the December Board meeting, adoption of the Guidelines by the Board means that those Home Schoolers wishing to be deemed eligible for the award of the School Certificate must enrol for the whole of Year 10 in an accredited or recognised school.

Yours sincerely

G G Weller
for J L Lambert
President
27/2/1992

THE COURIER-MAIL SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 1992

Parents key to star pupils

Home support big influence

By WILLIAM LOWTHER
and HUGH MUIR

> ‘THERE is no single magic button that will unlock educational excellence’

SPENDING on schools, size of classes and even the quality of teacher training have little impact on pupils' achievement, new research shows.

The key factor is how much support a child is given at home. Thousands of children in 20 countries were involved in the world-wide study, hailed by experts as "the most scientifically sound survey of its type ever done".

Researchers looked at a variety of schooling systems, hoping to find a "magic bullet" that made the most successful pupils in different countries excel.

Gregory Anrig, president of Educational Testing Services, of Princeton, New Jersey, which carried out the maths and science tests, said: "We found that all the things you would think would help students do better had no consistent relationship with higher achievement.

"A longer school year, more instructional time spent on maths and science, better-trained teachers, higher amounts of the gross national product being spent on education .i. . it doesn't seem to matter.

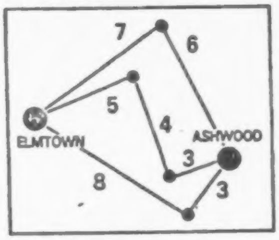
"The only two areas we found to be consistently connected with high achievement were leisuretime reading and the student's attitude towards science and maths.

"Both these things are influenced heavily by the home. Indeed, the home is the key to education. The cultures where education is valued very highly in the home achieve the best results. That's the real message."

ETS, the world's largest private educational measurement institution, also develops and administers American university entrance examinations.

Problems put to children in 20 countries

QUESTION 1



THE figure shows three routes between two points, measured in miles. How long is the shortest route? *Answers are below.*

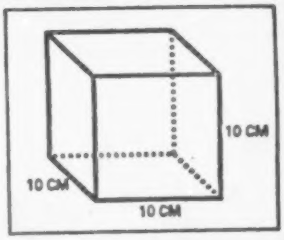
QUESTION 2

THE total weight of three suitcases is 28lb. John's suitcase weighs as much as the other two together. What is the weight, in pounds, of John's suitcase? (a) 13; (b) 14; (c) 15; (d) 22.

QUESTION 3

WHALES, seals, horses and bats are all classified in the same group because they have many of the same characteristics. Which of the following is one of these characteristics? (a) they produce milk to feed their young; (b) they use gills for breathing; (c) they lay eggs; (d) meat is their main food.

QUESTION 4



WHAT is the total surface area of the cube? (a) 240 square centimetres; (b) 400 sq cm; (c) 600 sq cm; (d) 1,000 sq cm.

Of the countries asked to take part in the study, only Germany and Japan refused, although some entered only one or two of four sections.

Children aged nine and 13 were asked questions relating to measurement of length, weight and area. They were also asked to answer simple multiple choice science questions.

Schools were chosen to include equal number of boys and girls and to balance city and rural and wealthy and poor areas.

Two thousand pupils in England took part. Final averages were worked out using a complicated weighting procedure.

The average score was 62.5. England's was 63, Scotland's 64.25 and Ireland's 60.25. Hungary, with 73.5, Taiwan 71, and the former Soviet Union 67.25, were well above average. The US scored 61.25.

Mr Anrig said: "The overriding conclusion is that there is no single magic key that will unlock educational excellence."

Eighty percent of the English 13-year-olds who took the test were able to answer Question One correctly, which meant they, with Korea, were joint ninth out of the 20 countries. But only 32 percent of the nine-year-olds got it right. Only Ireland, Portugal and Slovenia scored lower.

On Question Two, 72 percent of the 13-year-olds answered correctly. They shared 13th place with Canada. Thirty-two percent of the nine-year-olds got it right and only three countries, Canada, the US and Portugal, did worse.

Question Three was correctly answered by 58 percent of the 13-year-olds, which left them joint 16th out of 20, along with Ireland. Forty-three percent successfully completed Question Four, the sixth best performance.

ANSWERS: 11 miles; b; a; c.

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MEDIA

*Radical changes for schools in N.S.W - Performance monitoring, improvement in oral communication...." Ken Boston Dir. Gen Educ. Sun Herald 2.2.92

*Uni Entry -Easier than you think .S.M.H. 7.2.92

*Two youths stabbed in wild brawl as 150 schoolboys armed with knives, bats, poles and chains fought each other at a Melbourne suburban carpark S.M.H. 11.2.92

*"Research shows that most high school and primary school pupils do not know how to study intelligently and efficiently" S.M.H. 13.2.92

*Alastair Mackerras long term ex-principal of Sydney Grammar "Academic elitism is the only effective way to run a school, I don't think it is possible to organise a school to suit the very clever and the very stupid." S.M.H 28.2.92

*How the H.S.C Odds Go Against Girls by Marlene Goldsmith MLC Chairman of the N.S.W Legislative Standing Committee on social issues and a former high school teacher.Re: access to medicine and law by those students with high maths and science marks "...........Do we actually want lawyers who are mathematicians rather than debaters or persuaders? Do we want doctors who may not be very good at communicating with their patients ?............took a number of history teachers and gave them the same essay to mark. The marks given ranged from 20% to 90%...........A system that discriminates against English and the humanities is a very effective way of disriminating against girls.............." S.M.H 30. 1.92

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BOOKS FOR SALE

If you want any of these books please send an A4 size self-addressed envelope with $1.25 postage and a cheque for the price of the book to Homeschoolers Australia pty ltd P.O. Box 420 Kellyville N.S.W. 2153

Homeschooling for Excellence by D. & M. Colfax
new $20
second hand $17

High School Success (how to help your teenager succeed at high school) by L & E Murphy
2 copies new $16.50 @

Parent Power (How to help your child achieve at Primary School)by L & E Murphy
new $16.50

Better than School (highly recommended) by Nancy Wallace
new $23.

Child's Work (very highly recommended) by Nancy Wallace
new $23.

The Three R's at Home (recommended) by Susan & Howard Richman
new $19

How Children Fail by John Holt
second hand $3

How Children Learn by John Holt
second hand $3

Compelling Belief- The Culture of American Schooling by Stephen Arons (highly recommended)
new $18

School Can Wait by Raymond and Dorothy Moore highly (recommended)
second hand $14

Free at Last The Sudbury Valley School by Dan Greenberg (recommended)
new $12

Breastfeeding and Natural Child Spacing (highly recommended) by Sheila Kipley (Couple to Couple League)
2 copies new $20

THE CANBERRA TIMES 22/5/91

Majority of education students fail basic maths test

By KAREN HOBSON,
Education Reporter

Sixty per cent of a group of education students at the University of Canberra have failed a basic maths test.

Of the 143 first-year undergraduate and graduate diploma students, 34 could not multiply 0.3 by 10 and 39 gave the wrong answer when asked to multiply 0.5 by 0.5.

The undergraduates are studying to be early childhood and primary school teachers.

Those who failed the exam will be given another chance. A second fail could see them excluded from the course.

Associate Professor Clem Annice, of the university's Faculty of Education, says students who fail the resit exam could receive a letter asking them to show cause why they should not be excluded from the course for six months or a year on the basis of unsatisfactory performance.

The exam has been introduced in line with a recommendation of a 1989 discipline review of maths and science teacher education which found that many students expressed "considerable anxiety" about their knowledge in these areas and their competence to teach them.

..ANY FOOL KNOWS THAT NINE SEVENS ARE SIXTY FOUR..
TRER

Professor Annice was deputy chair of the review in maths education. "A significant number of students who come to us demonstrate anxiety and a poor attitude towards maths," she said.

"One of the things we are endeavouring to do is to overcome these deficits." Anxious tertiary students become anxious teachers who in turn could pass their anxieties to students.

The exam tested understanding of basic maths concepts to a Year 9 level, including simple addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, decimals, geometry and algebra. Most of the students taking the exam were Year 12 graduates.

This year's result is similar to last year's pilot exam where half of the 70 students failed.

Professor Annice is confident most of the students will pass the second test after revising the basic concepts taught to them in the primary and secondary years.

"Most will quickly pick it up . . . a significant number have probably not looked at straight multiplication or decimals for many years," she said.

However it is this capacity to "forget" the basics which concerns educationalists.

Professor Annice believes the exam results shows that many students lack a fundamental understanding of maths and its applications in society.

"They have a mechanistic knowledge, but not a real understanding . . . and as with anything mechanical if it is not used it becomes rusty and needs to be greased up and revised," she said.

A parent of one of the students who failed the exam said there was no argument with the university testing the students, the question was why they were failing.

"It is an indictment on the college system if the students have lost their early grade concepts because they are not reinforced at Years 11 and 12," the parent said.

The discipline review said the level of teaching of maths and science in primary schools had to be raised "as a matter of urgency".

It recommended minimum levels of maths education for student teachers of 108 hours for early childhood and 144 for primary.

Professor Annice said the compulsory content at the University of Canberra was about 90 hours though it was envisaged this would be increased to the recommended target as part of a review of the Bachelor of Education degree.

"The university is committed to graduating students who are competent in maths and who are competent to teach maths," she said, though acknowledged it was unable to offer a bridging course for students who failed the exam.

The discipline review recommends that universities provide a remedial program which can be incorporated as a compulsory elective for students not passing the competency test.

Professor Annice said students who failed would have to do "independent study" as the university did not have the resources to run a remedial program.

The faculty wanted tertiary accredited level maths and English as essential prerequisites for new students, but had been unable to enforce this because of the admissions procedures used. Both were currently "desirable" prerequisites.

The discipline review recommended each state develop a systematic inservice program aimed at teachers of mathematics and science.

The University of Canberra runs a special inservice course, Primary Instruction for Mathematical Modelling.

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WORKSHOP

22 nd MARCH 1992
SUNDAY

Discovering and discussing working with children and their learning in a non- school type (unschooling, natural learning) way.

An interractive presentation detailing the practical and research base for this type of learning. Contribute to and share experiences and insights about how to extend and facilitate this type of learning. Can it be done at high school level ?

Date: Sunday 22/3/92

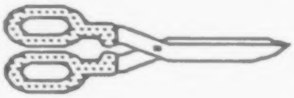
Time: 1-5 p.m.

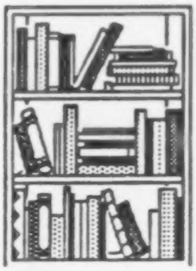
Cost : $ 10 per family or individual

Venue: Woodstock Community Centre Church St Burwood- Upstairs conference Room 2.

R.S.V.P. by March 20th to Homeschoolers Aust. P.O. Box 420 Kellyville 2153 or phone to 629 3727 and leave your **NAME and PHONE NUMBER.**

If there are not enough people interested this event will not go ahead and I will ring you on the 21st March to cancel.





SEMINAR

SATURDAY
4TH APRIL '92

PROGRAMMING FOR THE HOMESCHOOL

Find out about
*legal requirements,
*how to program
*resources,
*discuss already written programmes ?

Date: Saturday 4/4/92

Time: 1-5 p.m

Place: Castle Hill Community Center, (upstairs) Old Castle Hill Rd, Castle Hill

Cost : $ 10 per family or individual

R.S.V.P. By April 2nd Jo-Anne Beirne P.O. Box 420 Kellyville 2153. Please include your name and phone number or phone to 629 3727 and leave your **NAME and PHONE NUMBER.**

If there are not enough people interested this event will not go ahead and I will ring you on the 3rd April to cancel.

SEMINAR

2nd APRIL 1992

CONSIDERING or STARTING TO HOMESCHOOL ?

Want to know/discuss more about legal requirements, practical arrangements, resources, an overview of programming, questions answered on socialization, how to?university etc.?

Date: Thursday 2/4/92

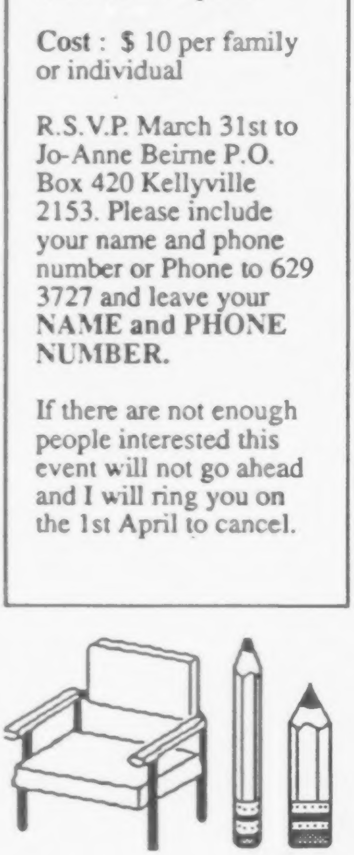
Time: 7-10 p.m

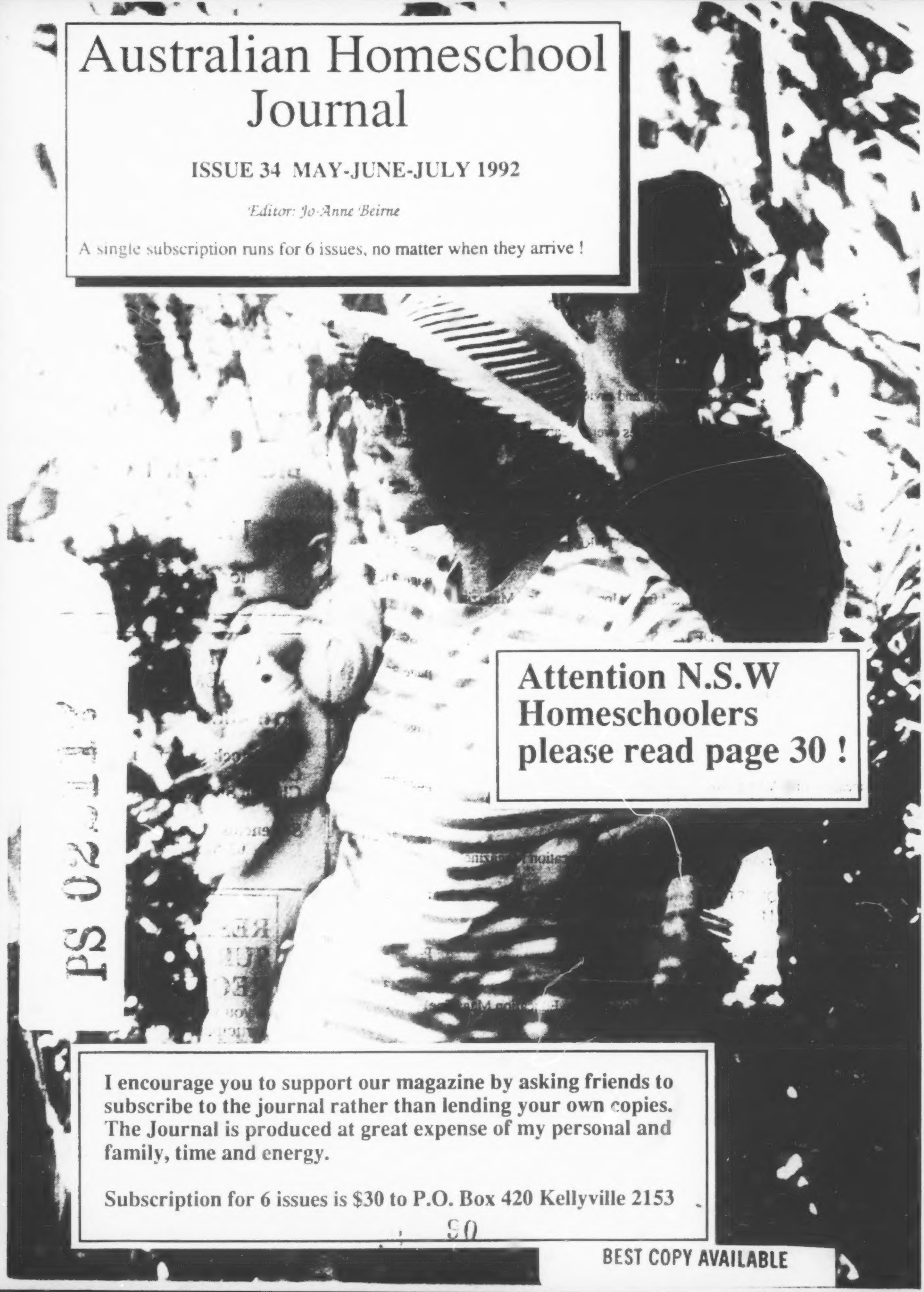
Venue: Woodstock Community Centre Church St Burwood- the Youth Center at the back, near carpark.

Cost : $ 10 per family or individual

R.S.V.P. March 31st to Jo-Anne Beirne P.O. Box 420 Kellyville 2153. Please include your name and phone number or Phone to 629 3727 and leave your **NAME and PHONE NUMBER.**

If there are not enough people interested this event will not go ahead and I will ring you on the 1st April to cancel.





Australian Homeschool Journal

ISSUE 34 MAY-JUNE-JULY 1992

Editor: Jo-Anne Beirne

A single subscription runs for 6 issues, no matter when they arrive !

Attention N.S.W Homeschoolers please read page 30 !

I encourage you to support our magazine by asking friends to subscribe to the journal rather than lending your own copies. The Journal is produced at great expense of my personal and family, time and energy.

Subscription for 6 issues is $30 to P.O. Box 420 Kellyville 2153

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Australian Homeschool Journal

ISSUE 34 MAY-JUNE-JULY 1992

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Richard Feynman (and a little Beirne)

Homeschooling After Schooling at age 14 page 37-38
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Attention N.S.W Homeschoolers please read page 30 !

HOMESCHOOL PICNIC, RESOURCE-SHARING & INVENTIONS DAY

BICENTENNIAL PARK

29. 11. 92

SEE PAGE 32 for details

HOMESCHOOL SEMINAR

16TH AUGUST 1992

Woodstock Community Center
Church St., Burwood

See enclosed handout or ring 02 629 3727

RESEARCH SURVEY REQUEST

If you would like to participatein a Research Study into the nature of Curriculum in the Homeschool please see page 41 .

THE BEIRNE FAMILY

Dear friends

Why I'm late !

love

Jo-Anne

Yes, it is true this issue of the Australian Homeschool Journal is exceptionally late but I do have a few really good excuses. Firstly, I was lucky enough to be invited to attend the inaugural meeting of Home Education International by Dr Raymond and Dorothy Moore - a very special experience, as well as the New England Homeschool Conference organised by Homeschool Associates of New England in Boston . As always just being with Dr Raymond and Dorothy Moore is to experience selfless Christian devotion to the cause of homeschooling. They are held in very high esteem and respect by the thousands of people that they have educated and helped with practical support over many years. I also had the opportunity to learn much about homeschooling in the U.S.A. and to meet and talk with some of the people I have really admired over the years including Patrick Farenga from Holt Associates.

BREAKING IN A NEW COMPUTER

Since then lots of things have slowed down production of the magazine. Being no genius on the computer, I have hit quite a few snags with some updating needing to be purchased and then learnt. I always feel like a real homeschooler when I have some new computer hardware and software, as I come to it quite literally frightened to death and have always to master the paranoia that my hard work is not going to disappear or not find its way on to the printed page or somehow manage to collapse. I didn't really manage very well for this issue but I'm planning to know more for the next.

WINTER ILLS

We had much joy and sadness in the past two months with finding out we were expecting our fifth baby and then losing it. Like many others we have had lots of days and nights (why are they always so bad at night?) with sick kids and even a few trips to the hospital. the virus around this winter has been a horror and even I've been down with it. Although I really believe that homeschooling is important work our needs as a family must always come first for me.

SCIENCE DAY with Rosemary Hafner

Mari Taberner helped me organise a Science Day at Woodstock where Rosemary Hafner from the Board of Studies gave an excellent presentation on the new Science and Technolgy Curriculum K-6 (available from the Board of Studies 925 8111 for a brochure to be sent.).

MOSS VALE & SINGELTON SEMINARS

There was a full Sunday at Moss Vale talking to some superb homeschooling families about unstructured homeschooling organised by Greg and Margaret Stone and an information day at Singelton with 15 families organised by Laurel and Ross Clarke of Muswellbrook. Also many interviews- the highlights being a searching one on regional ABC with Kate Benecke arranged by Jim Cherry of Quirindi and one for the Education Department magazine by Deborah Arantz. We have also had some good feedback from articles in the West Australian (written by Eamon Murphy) and Nine to Five recently.

THE CHILDREN OF GOD

I have spent many long hours talking to the families and trying to keep track of what is happening legally and emotionally to the so -called "Children of God" families. I think it is really important to keep abreast of the results of these court cases as they could well impact the future security of homeschooling. (More about this inside the journal)

QUEENSLAND & W.A.

Some W.A. families are facing

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some very difficult situations with regards to their homeschooling. The Minister to date has been totally unapproachable and has even allowed Welfare Department officers to be used in what is certainly an Education , not a welfare matter. The new "trial policy" in W.A. is awful and I have written a personal criticism of it which is available ifanyone wants a copy. There is a real campaign going on among Queenslanders to let Mr Braddy know how appalling is the Qld legislation and I too have been keeping up my own barrage to him.

The phone bill has arrived and is concrete evidence of all the "communication" that has been going on with some great & good people in Vic, Queensland & W.A. especially Gina Wright & Mei Cheng of W.A.. There is still a very good chance that more prosecutions will go ahead in W.A. and every new (seemingly impossible) setback gives me uncontrollable butterflies but somehow there is energy to think up another approach and we just keep moving forward.

BROAD EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

Annette Berryman from A.E.R.G in Victoria is trying hard to educate me to be less agreeable with politicians and more particular about demanding homeschooling rights and broad educational change and she is winning!

ACCESS TO N.S.W GOVERNMENT STORES

Between in-coming phone calls (only 32 this week), outgoing calls, housework, homeschooling, the washing, (I daren't say the ironing it gets done only as needed- sometimes), I was delighted to have a meeting that confirmed imminent homeschool access to N.S.W. Government Education Stores, commonly known as Q [for quartermaster] Stores, and I took the next paperwork step in hopefully getting homeschoolers access to Sales Tax exemption with the Tax Department (a slow process indeed) .

READING

My favourite homeschooling reading this month was of course G.W.S. and Home Education magazine. These great publications give me a boost to keep me functioning through the homeschooling week . I really enjoyed John Taylor Gatto's book 'Dumbing Us Down' , this is a short but masterful expose describing just how very bad institutionalised schooling is for children; in the opinion of this highly qualified and well respected practising teacher.

AUSTRALIAN AGENT FOR THE JOHN HOLT BOOK AND MUSIC STORE

Lots of the homeschooling books that I would like to read are not available here in Australia, so Patrick Farenga and I have reached an agreement about Homeschoolers Australiastocking the John Holt Book and Music Stores books and products. We are absolutely delighted about this and a load of books is already on the ship on its way to Australia. I plan to bring samples of all that is available to homeschooling meetings and seminars I attend and am happy to facilitate functions where people feel they might like to see these useful books. Our Holt/Homeschoolers Aust. catalogue should be out soon and I will probably mail it with the next journal, exhaustion permitting. We also have samples of G.W.S available for anyone who would like to see this magazine before they order it.

THE MOORE FOUNDATION VIDEO & BOOKS

Possibly the best homeschooling resource that I have ever seen is the new video about homeschooling by Dr. Raymond and Dorothy Moore. It is so good I have asked to sell it for them here. It cost the Moores $U.S. 40 000 to make and I am not surprised as it is so professionally done. It features searching and intelligent interviews with long term homeschoolers from many different backgrounds & experiences using different approaches. I was stunned by the story of the mother with multiple sclerosis who homeschools her three daughters and very impressed by the achievments of all of the children featured. I personally think this is a superb resource for everyone from administrators and politicians to new and experienced homeschoolers. It covers all the main issues in less than an hour. It seems to me that for those who do not have time to read a book, or do not wish to read one (critics, relatives etc.) this is the perfect option. It is available for $40 posted. Because many people ask us for the the Moore's books we now have them available please see page 47 this issue for details.

THE RESOURCE BOOK

I get lots of requests about the update of the Resouce Book and it is finally on the move again. If you have anything you wish to be included please send it (typed !) to P.O. Box 420 Kellyville 2153. Thank you !

HOMESCHOOLING PICNIC DAY NOV. 1992

Gregory, my son, and I would like to get a homeschooling picnic together for Sunday 29th November 1992 at the Bicentennial Park at Homebush. All families are invited from everywhere and grandparents are especially welcome. If you don't know the Bicentennial Park, there is a great bike track and lots of room to move and things to do. As part of this day Gregory is inviting other homeschooling kids to bring along inventions to share in a non-competitive, fun way. Even if the inventions component does not get off the ground we are hoping that many families will join us for this relaxing, sharing day. I am hoping that we might also use it as a day to recycle books/equipment that we are no longer using and access homeschooling information and products .

Best wishes from Jo-Anne

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SHARING INFORMATION, VIEWS AND CONCERNS

JILL ALROE GILGANDRA

AN OPEN & FLEXIBLE OFFICIAL ATTITUDE

Mr David Evans, BOSLO from Bathurst, attended our first visit. All went well fortunately, despite my having given up on detailed programming and not keeping a diary for the last year. I presented him with a small mountain of past detailed records, but asked him whether he would prefer to actually observe the children, their progress and work or read about it. Mr. Evans opted for the former. I guess the reality of the situation is that he is aware that we are now fairly experienced with home schooling, are fully committed and coping well, the children are thriving and well ahead of their age peers, that we are well resourced, we take positive steps to overcome any deficiencies and that we are looking ahead to life after homeschooling for our children. No doubt, he would have been less co-operative with our apparent lack of documentation if we were just starting out on homeschooling, but I thank him and am most relieved at his astuteness in assessing our circumstances.

From your records of who's homeschooling, are there any other homeschoolers in our region who might be interested in an occasional natter or note comparing? The great distances out here may preclude anything even semi-formalised, but just having a couple of contacts would be encouraging.

I am enclosing a photocopy of an amusing article found on a Pathology Company newsletter from last December. I contacted the editor to enquire if we could possibly republish the account in our journal. He said the origin of the article was obscure, but that he liked it so much he went ahead and published it anyway and couldn't see why we shouldn't do the same...

> "The heaviest element known to science was recently discovered by university research scientists, the element, tentatively named "Administratium", has no protons or electrons and thus has an atomic number of zero. However, it does have 1 neutron, 125 assistant neutrons, 75 vice neutrons and 111 assistant vice neutrons. This gives it an atomic mass of 312. These 312 particles are held together by a force that involves the continuous exchange of meson-like particles called morons.
>
> Since it has no electrons, Administratium is inert. However, it can be detected chemically as it impedes every reaction it comes in contact with. According to the discoverers, a minute amount of Administratium caused one reaction to take four days to complete when it would have normally occurred in less than one second. Administratium has a normal half-life of approximately three years, at which it does not actually decay but instead undergoes a reorganisation in which assistant neutrons, vice neutrons and assistant vice neutrons exchange places. Some studies have shown that the atomic mass actually increases after each reorganisation. Research at other laboratories indicates that Administratium occurs naturally in the atmosphere. It tends to concentrate at certain points such as government agencies, large corporations and universities and can usually be found in the newest, best appointed and maintained buildings."

MARGARET STONE MOSS VALE

SOUTHERN HIGHLAND SUPPORT GROUPS

It has been an exciting start to 1992 in the Southern Highlands. We began the year with a bang-twelve families converged on the McAulays house one Sunday afternoon. It was a great time of saying "Hi, who are you?" and hearing each others version of day to day homeschooling. Some have been at it for 3-4 years, some 1 or 2 and others just about to begin so it was a good cross section of people.Since then we seem to have divided into three camps mainly due to location and numbers of children-the Bundanoon people, the "little kids" group and the "big kids"group. The "little kids" have been sliding in slime, paper weaving, stain glass windowing, string ballooning and lots more on Friday mornings.The "big kids" have spent their Tuesday afternoons exploring various backyards ranging from suburban size to 400 acres or so. We've caught lizards, locusts, grasshoppers, water snails, tiny fish, tadpoles, built elaborate cubbies, yabbied in the dam, rescued stray puppies, performed amazing feats on trampolines, stalked giant mozzies at the Rileys', etc. We mums have enjoyed great chats, commiserations, laughs and shared each others' interests. We've all gone home from Janece Rileys' laden with flowers, we've spent days tramping up mountains, around wetlands and sat in the sunshine discussing, disecting and categorizing fleeces for spinning and weaving. Sue McAulay commented one day about how we've changed over the years. Three years ago it was just three families and we mums had to chase each other around the kitchen tables as the girth of our tummys didn't allow us to pass. Two years ago whoever wasn't breast feeding poured the tea and checked the older children. Last year it was porta cots and constant surveillance of small walkers. This year the Riley and Merz families are with us and we're lucky if we remember a spare pair of undies for the youngest! The patchwork and spindle spinning have re-appeared and needles are clicking to the sound of the jug boiling.

All the children seem to have particular interests. Music features with pianists, clarinetists & recordists. We have potters, weavers, model builders, artists, sewers, reptile enthusiasts, bird lovers and expert sand diggers. Soccer is still the favourite game to play all together especially when some of the Dads join in. Most importantly, we all have a wonderful time and appreciate the support and encouragement we are to one another. We are all looking forward to our next Homeschool concert-always a barrel of laughs and an opportunity to hear the latest musical pieces etc. The parents have to participate in these special nights too and its amazing what some people are willing to do in front of their friends! The "staff" are still recovering from our regular"staff dinner", this term held at the McAulays. We all ate too much and laughed too hard and all needed a lie down the next day. So that's some of whats happening in the Southern Highlands.

ISOLDE PETERSEN WARBURTON

A LATE READER

Thank you very much for the Australian Homeschool Journal. I was particularly interested in the article "Homegrown and Homeschooled" by Raymond Moore. I'd been a bit worried because Samantha can't read at all well. She has problems concentrating (I don't know the right word) on print. She is bright but can't really read-not for want of our trying. She will be eight in October. My concern about Samantha's reading originally came about because we know two boys (only months older thanSammi) who can read extremely well. They're from different families and attended different schools. Also another homeschooled boy who is a year older than Samantha and is also homeschooled reads well and boys are supposed to be slower than girls but we are becoming more confident that she will read when she is ready.

JANINE BANKS THE CHANNON

NATURAL LEARNING

I really enjoyed Earl Steven's article (AHJ 33), particularly the bit about watching a garden grow. That really hit home for me, as I watch and listen to my children as they cover so much ground each day. Today there was a puppet show with a narrator, yoga, lots of puzzles, lots of reading (by me to them), they set up their own obstacle course for some wild activity, some cooking, melting and burning candles they made the other day and planting some cress and mustard seeds. It's raining here, so we all walked down to the creek to see how far over our causeway the water has risen. If we go to town this week we'll have to use our suspension bridge to get out.

How much are they learning? As Earl says, we'll have to wait for the season to progress. I love it. It's so reassuring. I also enjoyed Peggy O'Mara'a article very much. My eldest is eight so I've a few years to go but her article made me feel glad we're home schooling so we have the time to be with them before these challenging years. It was a beautiful article.

ROSLYN BAIRD KODINA S.A.

WANTED: RELIABLE CORRESPONDENTS

Life is hectic with three children along with our veterinary business. They enjoy life with embroidery, craft, music, swimming, horse riding and dancing. I think actual bookwork comes after all the "extra curricular" activities but it seems to come along slowly or non-existent for some time, then in leaps and bounds. My husband works away in our branch practice two out of four weeks- coming home on the weekends- so it's usually just the kids and myself. Also, for trips to Adelaide, its just too hard to arrange Bill to be "off duty" so we go by ourselves.Simone (who is eight) has been busy making and sending her "Simone's Fun Time Magazine" full of stories, jokes, poems, anything. She just loves writing to people, penpals etc. The only trouble is that a large percentage of children and adults aren't good correspondents. She asks if you could make a note in the journal to advertise her magazine. It's free and she would like people to write in with contributions: **Simone's Fun Time Magazine c/-Simone & Eloise Baird PO Box 251 KODINA SA 5554**

LEONIE WESTENBERG WEMBLEY WA

CHILD INITIATED LEARNING

Thank you for the copy of your last Australia Homeschool Journal. My husband and I really enjoyed reading it. Our three oldest sons read the article by Nadia Wheatley on books being used rather than "read" and found it interesting; our eldest, having been to school, dissecting books in class. The excerpts of your letter to the WA Minister for Education were great. We have written also to the Shadow Minister for Education and have received a reply. Actually, the article I personally enjoyed the most was the article by Joanne Brugmans on Natural Learning. This type of child initiated learning seems to be the hardest for most people to accept and understand. As an example of the kinds of learning and activities that children will undertake on their own, here is a page from our daily journal that occurred in the last school holidays.

Now, I know that learning occurs at all times, but I usually don't bother to record any "learning experiences" during the holidays. I figure I need the break! However, on this particular day I got to thinking about what the boys (then aged 11, 8,7) were doing and grabbed a pencil to jot activities down. The day went like this: L: constructing with Lego G: reading "Young Pioneers" by Rose Wilder Lane, N: listened to story I read to preschooler "The Midnight Garden", and discussed thoughts on how things look at night, L: has a friend over: building a fire in the back garden, heating sugar to burn so they can observe the components of sugar. Other boys gradually become interested. All bake potatoes in the ashes for lunch. L: and friend reading Usborne Book of Electricity and Book of magnets, G: has friend visiting they set up and play several draughts games together, N: watching, making suggestions, N: constructing with Meccano, all helped with ideas from the electricity book-working with batteries to make a bulb glow.

As you can see they covered many subject areas across the curriculum and I personally feel that any learning that may have occurred was of more importance and will probably be long-lasting simply because it was a) relevant and b) interest generated.

JULIA BOXX MUDGEE

BOARD OF STUDIES LIASON OFFICER

We write to share with other readers our experiences with our Board of Studies Liason Officer. Being newcomers to home schooling, we have never experienced the unhappy or difficult situations had by many families with some "inspectors" from the Department of Education. It seems the new Liason Officers are offering a much more positive approach. Our officer, Mr. David Evans, based at Bathurst for theWestern Region, is certainly one such person.

Dave Evans has visited us in our home twice, once at the outset of our home schooling programme late last year and again a few weeks ago at our request. We have found him to be not only totally professional in his approach, but also a warm, friendly and enormously supportive individual. He has answered our questions with clarity and accurate information. When unsure of the answers, he has said so instead of "waffling on" with personal assumptions. He then carefully follows up the issue and promptly gets back to us, by phone and in writing, again with accurate information. We believe he views the relationship as we do i.e a team approach between him and us with the goal being the assurance of a quality educational programme for our children, one which nurtures their learning potentials and encourages their pursuit of varied interests in an individualized, diverse and comprehensive way. He is also a marvellous"resource" person.

Indeed, we do not view him at all as a threatening person to be"tolerated" in our homeschooling programme, but rather as one we would be very hard pressed to do without! ! He is one of the major reasons for the positive feelings we have in starting home schooling and for the success of our programme with the children thus far. We sincerely hope this liason continues over time and that other readers are experiencing the same with their B.O.S.L.O.s.

JOY GODKIN A.E.R.G .,VIC

VICTORIAN LEGISLATION DEFEATED

The Alternative Education Resource Group, particularly those people who have taken action over the Out Of School Education Bill in the last two months, wish to thank you both for your moral support, efforts in preparing relevant documentation, and your readiness to share ideas on the issues raised. We too share your view that the issue is far from being resolved, however the deferment of the passage ofthe Bill plus the promise of consultation is seen as an important first step. We look forward to the continuation of the frank relationship established between Hawthorn and Kellyville on Home Education Matters.

SUE DICKSON WOOLLAHRA

INTEREST LED LEARNING

I've always believed in my heart, if not in practice, that children learn best when they direct their own learning and are genuinely interested in a subject. Some evidence of this happened last year pending our Board of Studies inspection. I decided to revise with Emmanuel (aged 10) some of the things we had covered during the year in science and social studies.

Topics of his own choice included the universe, the history of flight and a study about windmills. In each of these areas he seemed to have remembered even the smallest detail. I was so impressed! We moved onto a topic that I had chosen - leaves. He couldn't remember the name of the tiny holes on the bottom of the leaf, nor their function and he was pretty vague in explaining why deciduous trees lose their leaves in winter. I found this whole exercise very interesting to say the least. Not that I have ever doubted self directed learning but this certainly proved the point to me.

K. LAIBER MADDINGTON WA

A CATHOLIC CURRICULUM AVAILABLE

Mary of the Cross School is an Australian Home Study Programme established to cater for the needs of young Australian Catholic children in their primary school years.The school's development was inspired by the work of Mother Mary MacKillop, who took Catholic education to the poor and to isolated families of early Australia. The school's name has been taken from Mother Mary's name in religion. The School aims to provide an elementary curriculum with its emphasis on the basics. Mathematics, Reading, Spelling and Science will be provided along with formal English (grammar, punctuation, written expression and word study), History and Geography will look at the world in general but will focus on Australia. Reading material will be provided at each year level. The upper grades will also be required to read books from a list of the classics. Lesson packages will be mailed regularly and will include tests and exercises to be returned for grading. Suggestions will be made where extra work is required. Awards will be given where work is of a high standard. For more details please contact Mary of the Cross School, 22 Braborne Street, MADDINGTON WA 6109 Fees schedule -1992 1 child $75.00 per term, 2 children $135.00 per term, 3 children $185.00 per term

LYNDA HATFIELD QUIRINDI

HOMESCHOOLING AFTER CORRESPONDENCE

It was great to receive yet another terrific A.HJ. It has supplied many stimulating hours of reading as well as producing enthusiasm and confidence. Thank you for the tremendous amount of time and effort you are putting into the journal and also to your family for sharing you. We have seen the light, have left correspondence behind and returned to homeschooling. Oh, the liberation ! The pressure to keep up with weekly returns was enormous and seemed to dominate our lives.Well, two of the three have returned. Last year, Monty, not knowing if he wanted to go to high school, decided he would try it out. So we arranged for him to attend the local high school for three days. He enjoyed it so thought he would like to go for year 7. We suggested he try it for six months to give it a fair trial. There are some aspects he is being stimulated by and he is having no trouble coping with the situation but as yet he can't imagine staying on. However, if he does return to homeschooling he won't be sitting out here on the property wondering what he is missing out on. He will know!

We recently had a wonderful trip with another family. Together we bought an 18-seater ex-school bus, gathered a few basic necessities together and set out for the Nullarbor. From Kalgoorlie we travelled towards Alice Springs spending two weeks at an Aboriginal community, Warburton, where we worked for two years when Monty was a toddler. At Giles Weather Station we inspected some incredibly simple recording equipment all soon to be computerised, climbed 'the Rock', enjoyed Christmas in Alice Springs with friends, then down to Coober Pedy, Woomera, Port Augusta, Mildura, Dubbo and home. Still we are building our 'big' house. Milling our own cypress pine is very satisfying (though slow) and a great learning experience. Visitors always welcome. What a difference it makes having a support group close by and an empathetic authorised person !!

LAUREL CLARKE MUSWELLBROOK

RESOURCES

Firstly I want to thank you for the Homeschool Journal, it has been a great help and support to me while I have been getting started with homeschooling. As soon as it arrives I sit down and "devour" it. It has been a real eye opener. I have always

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disliked having to part with my children and send them off to "school" and at the time there seemed little other choice, so my older two children completed their schooling in government run schools. Now however, I have the opportunity to school my last three at home and am gaining confidence with the help of lots of extra reading and support from other homeschooling people.

RESOURCE MATERIALS

Science: For simple but great science projects and experiments for various age groups, particularly primary and lower secondary level students, I found the book by Leonard De Vries excellent. It's called 101 Amazing experiments. Available at the library.
Mathematics and English: I also recommend the "Video Aided Learning" programs "Maths made easy" and "English made easy". They contain all the basic maths and English principles which are taught in schools and also available as part of the program is the help of a phone tutor and achievement certificates which can be used in a portfolio arrangement.
Language: We have chosen to learn sign language. It is easy and fun to learn and just as useful as any foreign language. We use the Talking Hands videos which are available at our library. These come with booklet and signing dictionary. In the city or wherever there is a school for the deaf these videos probably will be available, possibly also classes for the learning of signing. The possibilities for using signing are numerous.

CATHERINE ERREY OURIMBAH

FUN WITH MATHS AT 6 YRS OLD & WORKSHOPS

I'd like to tell you of some fun we've been having with maths. Over Easter we went for a long drive by car. Feeling somewhat bored Anya (6 years) asked if we could do some sums. So, "There were 5 birds feeding on the ground. 3 flew away. How many were left? Pause "2" came her answer. We went on this way for some time. Anya is now pretty comfortable with addition and subtraction of numbers up to 12. She quite often asks me to make sums up for her. Perhaps the inspiration came from Anya'a cousin who attends school and has 20 "mentals" to do each night.

Another thing Anya enjoyed while travelling was reading the speed limit numbers. This idea came from a friend Anya's age. If the new speed limit requires a drop in speed Anya will keep repeating it until I slow down. She is a good judge of our speed now. Thank you especially for the articles "Housecleaning and Homeschooling" by Debbie Westheimer and "Like a Weaning" by Peggy O'Mara. Thanks too for the workshops you run. The two I attended really helped me gain the confidence I needed to go ahead. I'd like to attend a workshop/gathering of practising homeschoolers to hear and share experiences.

ROBYN TSAPAZI LEEMING WA

HOME EDUCATING A SPECIAL NEEDS CHILD

I read with interest an article in the West Australian yesterday (June 2nd) titled "Learning at Home". It was discussing home teaching, the positive aspects and made comment on some concerns. I found the article most interesting. I started home teaching this year with my daughter. Perhaps we are a little different to others who have undertaken this role. My daughter suffers from aphasia, and dyspraxia, and as a consequence she is non verbal. She is dependent on Australian Sign language and Auslan for communication . I am not sure of the numbers of parents who have learning disabled children and have chosen to teach them at home, but I understand that most of the home teaching programmes are targeted at "regular" children. I have found home teaching very rewarding and my daughter has benefited enormously from our time at home. Her vocab for instance has doubled to over 400 signs - very encouraging and I am determined to continue. If any of your readers have anything you think might be of interest I would be grateful.

(I will pass on Robyn's address or your letters if you send your letters to P.O. Box 420 Kellyville 2153.)

MARCELLE FOUNDLING BATHURST

BATHURST AREA CONTACTS

Hi! I'm just writing to see if there is anyone home educating or intending to homeschool in the Bathurst area. If so I would love to hear from you on (063) 322132. I've just moved into the area and feeling like a loner as far as homeschooling goes. Thanks for all the work that goes into the journal, it's very much needed and appreciated.

ANGELA EDWARDS WAHROONGA

BOARD OF STUDIES INSPECTION

Just a quick note to let you know how our recent Homeschool registration inspection went. In a word - great! We had Donna Gibbs, and she couldn't have been nicer. She sat in the living room the whole time and basically just chatted. The girls thought this was great - a captured audience- and proceeded to present her with "craft" offerings and show off everything and anything they could lay their hands on.

We used as our program the 6 key learning areas outline as sent out by the Board of Studies - the minimum requirements e.g. English- reading, writing, listening etc. plus daily journal to post-program. All with an open un-schooled approach - the main criteria being the girls interest level. We were up front with her that it was very much an evolving experience for all of us, and that as such we didn't exactly know what we'd be doing. We have the Maths and Science and Technology syllabus, and I explained that our minimum expectation, however, was to have covered all areas as set out in these by the end of the primary years - via the unschooled approach. Much to our surprise she fully understood and supported this, suggesting we get hold of the English syllabus which she had been working on. (when it comes out in May/June).

Anyway, she is recommending a 2 year exemption, and commended us on our commitement to our girls' education and made comment about the "rich learning environment" we were providing for them. All in all, great stuff! We're very conscious of how the ease with which this monumental change/ milestone/ landmark/watershed - that's the word I am looking for - was passed through, is due in part to your (and it is late and I need another big word and can't quite get it - washing up 6 times a night is taking its toll I think!) stupendous contribution to homeschooling. The confidence we got from poring over the various literature - resource books - the programming workshop, etc. - to go with our convictions was invaluable. I can't imagine how difficult it must have been to "chart the waters unnavigated" (isn't it amazing how metaphors get mangled when you're tired!) Many thanks, Joanne, for all the help. We're just esctatic about the whole thing and very grateful you bothered to invest your time and energy promoting homeschooling.

MARY-ANNE CUMMINS BONNY HILLS

HOMESCHOOLING WITH A NEW BABY

I look forward to receiving the Journal and my husband has been able to get more in touch with homeschooling ideas by gradually reading the information as it arrives. He has been home with glandular fever for nearly a month and, for once, had time to see us in "action". The boys are progressing well and homeschooling is the best decision we have made. Thanks for all your help in the early days.Our third child is due to arrive in about a week and everybody tells me homeschooling will become too much with a new baby. Perhaps you have an interesting article on the subject for a future journal. I have no intention of sending the children off to school because we have a baby. The pregnancy so far has led to many wonderful learning experiences with my eldest, Joseph (7) deciding to become a Pathologist when he grows up! We hope to have the children present for the birth and Jeremy (4) can't wait to see the baby come out! A homeschooler's life is so different to people with children "in school" and I feel I'm helping make the world a better place. The institution of school seems to do more damage than good.

SUSAN LACOBA CAMPERDOWN

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY WORKSHOP WITH ROSEMARY HAFNER

I appreciated the Science and Technology workshop you organised with Rosemary Hafner at Woodstock and I wondered if a similar thing could be organised with the other inspectors in the key learning areas. I would be especially interested in one for Human Society and its Environment.

SUSAN CROSSLEY MOSS VALE

MOSS VALE SEMINAR

Thank you once again for your encouragement last Sunday at the seminar at Moss Vale. Thank you for giving your time, expertise and experience so graciously to us. We really do appreciate it and I personally benefit greatly. I especially appreciate your honesty in dealing with the realities of homeschooling.

TERESA STEVENSON JIMBOOMBA

REMOVING STRUCTURE

Dear Jo-Anne re our discussion about structure or lack of it: Phil (6) was feeling sullen and resentful because I was sitting him down each morning at 9am doing things that I felt he should be but that he disliked. He wasn't happy and although I was feeling that I was doing the right thing so I could answer the critics I wasn't happy either. I was mindful of the books and articles advising against early formal learning (Better Late than Early and School Can Wait) but I couldn't see how I could conscientiously not sit down with Phil each school day and yet say I was homeschooling.

Anyway, two weeks ago now I felt that it was no good seeing Phil unhappy and I was feeling like an ogre all the time and unhappy too, so I just stopped! And, surprise of surprises, Phil spent hours learning, including mowing the grass (under his Dad's supervision). Then he asked for help to create a sign advertising his lawn-mowing capabilities, and arranged with a friend in the local township to fix the sign to her fence. The hourly rate ($6.00) he discussed with Dad, allowing money for fuel and a little to contribute to dad for transport. The money he makes, he plans to spend repairing the 3 dismantled old Victas that he's pulled down and cleaned with Dad's help. And the hardest thing about all this? I didn't organize any of it. I feel guilty saying "I'm homeschooling Phil" for he is teaching himself (with good help from Dad!)

The nicest thing is that Phil isn't complaining about "no time to play" and he's a lot happier and more willing to do what I ask. I do still worry about what the neighbours will think of a 6 year old mowing lawns during school hours (or riding the go-kart) but from the results in such a short time (i.e. happier, more obedient boy, willing worker and his being able to stick at, or keep returning to a job at hand), I am gaining in the confidence that this is the right thing to do for us all.

EDUCATION ACTS, ADMINISTRATION, POLICY & HOME EDUCATORS

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE HOME EDUCATION LEGISLATION/ REGULATIONS/ POLICY TO SAY ?

ONE IDEA

1. The State acknowledges that the natural educator of the child is the family and guarantees to respect the inalienable right and duty of parents to provide, according to their means, for the religious and moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children.

2. Parents shall be free to provide this education in their homes or in private schools or in schools recognised or established by the State.

3. The State shall not oblige parents in violation of their conscience or lawful preference to send their children to schools established by the State, or to any particular school recognised by the State.

4. All children, in schools and in their homes, shall be guaranteed a certain minimum academic education.

ANOTHER IDEA

Children between the ages of 6 and 15 are required to attend school unless they have a reasonable excuse. (based on the Victorian legislation)

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

THE OPTION OF HOME EDUCATION

When considering or taking up the option of homeschooling anywhere in Australia, I believe it is your responsibility to become informed about the legislative and administrative requirements for your state, if any. (Education has been a state by state concern since Federation - though it is federally funded).

KNOW YOUR LAW

It is inconceivable that one would drive on the roads not knowing the road rules. There is an Act of Parliament in every State and Territory which governs education. You should get a copy of your Act, regulations and policy and read them so that you understand your rights. Except for N.S.W, the section that refers to Home Education is listed under the part called "Compulsory Attendance". Legislation is usually written to outline the basic "rules" while "policy, guidelines etc." are formulated by "Education Departments, Education Ministries or the Board of Studies" (the names change from state to state) as an extra to the Law. Supposedly to help administrators of the law define things more accurately and apply the law more reasonably. When tabled in Parliament or allowed for in the legislation guidelines and regulations usually have the same effect as the Law itself. However regulations & guidelines must be seen to reflect the "intention" of an Act although the administrators' interpretation of the intention of the Act is often a lot different from what we would desire.

SUPPORT GROUPS

After you have "read your rights" another avenue for explanation and interpretation of your Act and its attendant regulations (if any) are national & state newsletters and support groups - sensibly not all support groups take the same attitude with regards to the Law. For some people any interference by the State in what is seen as a basic "right" of parents, i.e. to CHOOSE the type of education they prefer for their children, is not accepted and these people have not become involved in any form of "registration" with the State. Other families choose the registration/ certification/ dispensation process with various degrees of enthusiasm and are treated by education adminstrators with various degrees of respect and intimidation. This treatment however makes no difference to your real right to homeschool and if the law or requirements in your State are onerous you may wish to help those people who are attempting to create change.

POLITICS

Unfortunately education in Australia is a political football and administration and policy tends to change depending on who is "in charge" at the time. The Liberal Party claims to have a more benevolent attitude to the concept of a parent's inalienable right to homeschool but in practice this tends to be token with the attendant Law and regulations being even more restrictive than those in Labor States. It is important for all of us to remember to keep our politicians informed on a regular basis of what we are doing in home education, what we desire for it and how they, as our representatives, can facilitate our wishes.

THE MINISTER

It has also become increasingly common in Australia over the last decade to make the responsible Minister, rather than a court of Law, the final arbiter of what is right and wrong in many areas of our lives, including education, though this is not the case in either Victoria or the A.C.T. In Victoria a definition of "reasonable excuse" is able to be defended in a magistrate's court by any parent. The main reason for this erosion of rights is the unwillingness of governments to be taken to court and "lose". To pre-empt such occurrences, laws have been written this way. Homeschoolers may well become a vocal group of people who feel compelled to object to this erosion of citizens rights to access a court of law.

WHOSE VERSION OF THE TRUTH ?

Any "working" committee or group that "studies homeschooling" in any state (as was recently done in Tasmania) and even committees at a federal level can manage to influence your homeschooling without your even knowing about it. For example some people feel that a change in Federal funding could conceivably force the States to become even more regulatory with regard to home education. So please take the time to keep informed and tell the people who can annoy your life permanently how you feel about things at a local (inspectors), state (administrators and Minister) and Federal (The Education Minister- Mr. Beazley) level.

BIG BUSINESS

In a recent interview with The Minister of Education in N.S.W, Virginia Chadwick, she was quoted as saying that she controls a budget of $4.5 billion, (Sun- Herald 19.7.92) which is almost a third of the State budget for N.S.W. This amount of money does not even include the income generatedby text book manufacturers, retailers or private tutors. Education is big business for a large number of people and homeschooling could easily be seen as threatening to that business.

IT'S TIME TO REALLY TALK ABOUT EDUCATION

Interesting reading on this topic includes

- Compelling Belief - The Culture of American Schooling by Stephen Arons
- Dumbing us Down - John Taylor Gatto

ANNETTE BERRYMAN of A.E.R.G has had the idea, and I fully support her, that we need to try hard to bring education issues (not just homeschooling issues) on to a bigger stage than just state by state lobbying and discussion. Education needs to be talked about as a real issue for everyone not just in terms of reforming the school system, but in terms of really discussing alternatives to the "factory" model.

We would like to encourage you to join us in a hopeful spirit of starting some long term openness about where education is going in Australia with a view to having all authorities acknowledge that education is much bigger than schools and that we are doing our society a great disservice by seeking to limit diversity and alternatives in education. If you would like to contribute ideas or write articles about this issue we would love to create a forum to print them. So please send your comments to

Annette Berryman c/- "OTHERWAYS" A.E.R.G 39 William St. Hawthorn 3122 Victoria or

Jo-Anne Beirne "AUSTRALIAN HOMESCHOOL JOURNAL" - Homeschoolers Australia P.O. Box 420 Kellyville 2153 N.S.W with your contribution.

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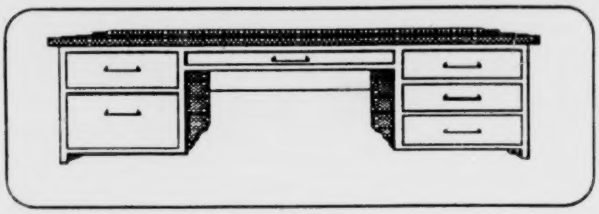

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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by ANDREA FULLER VENUS WAY SA

This is a brief report on the new Attainment Levels that the Education Department of S.A. is introducing to all schools - supposed to be fully implemented by 1994, and I believe all S.A. homeschoolers may be expected to use them for their evaluations as well.

A copy of the Attainment Levels should be available from all Regional Education Centres and all S.A. schools. The document folder is full of a lot of waffly jargon, but it also contains some concise, well set out summary sheets of each level and subject area. The following statements are my interpretations.

The rationale of this new "baby" (which is held in high esteem by most educational authorities, and I believe W.A. authorities are looking at using it also) include:-

1) provision for a uniform assessment and evaluation procedure for the whole state.
2) provision for individual assessment where children's progress can be evaluated without the need to compare against each other - testing is not part of the Attainment Levels.
3) providing a more positive approach to evaluation procedures and assessment since it is SKILLS LEARNT that is the basis for evaluation rather than what is not known
4) emphasis on skills aquired rather than knowledge retained.
5) provision for flexibility and change. The Attainment Levels are supposed to be under constant review.

All S.A. primary schools are supposed to be using the Attainment Levels by the end of next year, I think, and all schools including secondary by 1994. But other assessment procedures will also still be operational.

The Attainment Levels:-

Six levels of attainment have been defined for each subject area, through what the Education Department has termed "the compulsory years of schooling". (i .e. 5-15 yrs)

The arbitary number of six was specifically chosen to try and prevent correlating attainment levels with age levels or year levels. (10 yrs) (Reception to year 10)

Children of the same age or in the same year may be at different attainment levels. Children may be at different attainment levels in different subjects. It is not essential for children to be at attainment level 6 before attempting their SACE or other university entry exam.

The subject areas are:

The Arts - includes music, movement, drama, art
English- includes reading, writing and talking LOTE-language other than English. (not all children are expected to reach any level in LOTE)
Health and Personal Development
Mathematics
Science and Technology
Society and Environment

It is anticipated the subject areas may change in time. Attainment Statements for each level of each subject are given and then observable outcomes stated illustrated with examples. The following will give you a very brief view.

The Arts, Level 1, Attainment Statement: the student shares what he or she is doing and can explain activities and choices. Observable outcome: the student can show and explain art processes and products to others e.g. talks about choice of material and method of construction. e.g. responds to works of other children by questioning, applauding, joining in.

The Arts, Level 6, Attainment Statement: "the student recognises the importance of rehearsal and undertakes and applies the process of refinement and polishing for the presentation of art works to public audiences."

Health and Personal Development, Level 1: the student knows what people eat can influence their health. Level 6: the student understands the physiology of reproduction, pregnancy and birth and the social and pyschological aspects involved.

Society and Environment, Level 1: the student observes and records ways in which animals care for their young.Level 6: the student recognises causes and effects of natural and human induced disasters and their impact on the environment.

There are numerous attainment statements (between 5 and 20) for each level of each subject area and a majority of skills (not all) have to be met for the student to be deemed at that level.

I think it is well worth while for all SA homeschoolers to read through this. Its flexibility and emphasis on individual differences and broader perspectives make it particularly suitable for homeschoolers when trying to work out evaluation procedures and curricula planning to suit the department. It may also be a useful reference for other states.

As far as the SA Education Department is concerned one of its uses will be to compare different teaching methods and styles and schools (and homeschools?) for information on what is working well through these attainment levels.

Some of it seems very subjective and open to individual interpretation, but I personally see it as a positive step in the right direction, a much more realistic view of education today and of potential benefit to homeschoolers.

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VICTORIA

A VICTORY

The Victorians beat their change in legislation!!! Huge congratulations must go to all those people who put such a big effort into mobilising, writing and getting heard on the issues and those who are continuing to monitor the situation.

IS IT ALL OVER?

But if we hope that this will be the end of the trouble then I believe along with many others such as Annette Berryman of A.E.R.G., John Angelico of Families Honouring Christ and Frank Marrett of The Christian Family School that this is a forlorn hope. The Families Honouring Christ newsletter recently noted that a letter has gone out from the Director of the Schools Improvement Branch announcing that the branch *"will review current Department of School Education procedural requirements for home tuition in the light of concerns......." "Interest groups and organisations concerned with home tuition will continue to be consulted during this process"* The advice of all the Support groups to their members has been do NOT respond to these overtures.

DO NOT ASK FOR PERMISSION TO HOME TEACH

The fact is that the legislation in Victoria is excellent as it is & there is no need for parents to register with the Education Department if they have "a reasonable excuse" for their children not attending school. A reasonable excuse is that you are educating your children at home. (Education Act 1958 Section 53.) If you are already in the system why not consider opting out now?

PARENTS' RIGHT TO CHOOSE

This is exactly how it should be and how every Act should read. It was always the intention of the law makers that PARENTS EDUCATE their own children and, for those parents that couldn't there is the option of state or privately provided schools. Parents have always taken up this option perhaps more so in Victoria than in any other state. In all the years there has never been any evidence that these home educated children didn't become educated and go into the workforce and become normally functioning citizens.

A NEED TO LEGISLATE AND REGULATE?

So why the sudden need to regulate, define, prescribe and dictate restrictive legislation and then regulations to home educators? It cannot be because they presume that the parents who wish to undertake this option now are less well educated than their predecessors 10 - 40 years ago. After all most parents who are or who desire to home educate have themselves graduated from the Victorian schooling system. It cannot be standards or an unfavourable comparison of homeschooling standards because such a study has never been done and furthermore there is a great deal of evidence to show that the education standards in many Victorian (and all other States' schools) are extremely ordinary and many children are not being educated to the standard they deserve. It isn't a question of resources because the average homeschool with 4 children is 5 times richer in adult, community access and physical resources than the average child sharing a classroom with 25 others and one teacher. So what is the issue?

CONTROL

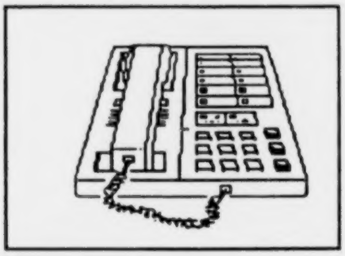
Many believe the issue is one of control and it comes from both sides of the political spectrum. Schools are the instruments used by governments and institutions to subtly indoctrinate and enforce the State's vision of acceptable truth. Read Compelling Belief - The Culture of American Schooling by Stephen Arons for more on this. The founders of compulsory schooling always argued that it is in the States' interest to ensure that children have a greater allegiance to the State than their families. How else could you guarantee that they would fight for the survival of a nation? How else could one ensure adherence to the common good, materialism, class - ism and elitism if one didn't have children from a very young age and tell them that they wanted these things for themselves and that God and family - values, authority and allegiances were of secondary value ?

ANTI-FAMILY

Many homeschoolers reject the policies, morals and view of life that governments have as being distinctly anti-family. Some of us believe that schools are the means whereby many children are indoctrinated into a me-first, materialistic, violent and peer group dominated world that we object to for a myriad of reasons. (For more on this read Dumbing Us Down - John Taylor Gatto).

THE GOOD WORK

Why should home educators be subject to any of the criteria that is laid down for schools when for the most part we object to their basic ethics, their assumptions about children and learning, their programs, their standards, their methods, their evaluations and their right to decide what is good and bad for society or even that they are capable of doing it in the first place? I hope the Victorians keep up the good fight and I believe they will win in the long run. It is an exciting example of what we have before us to aim for in every other state of Australia.



QUEENSLAND

QUEENSLAND THE WORST STATE FOR HOME EDUCATION

THE LAW IN QUEENSLAND

S. 57 EDUCATION (GENERAL PROVISIONS) ACT 1989 s. 58 page 21 **PART V—COMPULSORY EDUCATION**

57. Compulsory enrolment and attendance at school. Every parent of a child being of the age of compulsory attendance shall cause that child—
(a) to be enrolled at a State school; or
(b) to be enrolled at a non-State school,
and to attend on every school day the State or non-State school at which he is enrolled unless there is in existence at the material time, in respect of that child, a dispensation or provisional dispensation granted in accordance with section 58.

58. Dispensation from compliance with compulsory enrolment and attendance provisions. (1) The Minister may grant to a parent of a child of the age of compulsory attendance, in respect of that child, dispensation from compliance with any obligation set forth in section 57 during the period specified, if any, in such dispensation and may at any time revoke the dispensation so granted.

(2) In connexion with a dispensation referred to in subsection (1) any of the following shall be deemed to be a valid reason for such dispensation:—
(a) that the child concerned is receiving, in the opinion of the Minister, instruction—
(i) in a place other than a State school or a non-State school in accordance with guidelines prescribed by Order in Council;
(ii) in a range of subjects acceptable to the Minister, in some other manner which, in the opinion of the Minister, is efficient and regular;..................
(e) that there is any other reason that in the opinion of the Minister is valid.

ORDER IN COUNCIL

A copy of the Order in Council mentioned in 58 2 (a) (i) can be found in Queensland Government Gazette no. 146 p. 2993 and is in fact incorporated word for word in Home Schooling - An Information Booklet under the heading Guidelines in Respect of Instruction in a Place other than a State or Non-State School, page 2, published by the Department of Education in January 1990.

GUIDELINE 4

This horrible piece of discriminatory regulation specifies that to teach your own children you must either be 1. A Queensland registered teacher 2. Employ a Queensland registered teacher or 3. Use the Queensland Distance Education Program (at a cost of about $1000 per year)

THE THREE OTHER CHOICES

1. To use A.C.E. materials as no-one using these materials is prosecuted and they do not apply for dispensation. An officer of the Department has informed me that no prosecutions against A.C.E. families have been launched because although the A.C.A. is not yet registered as a private school there are registered private schools using the A.C.E. materials from which families who desire these materials could easily get access and thus be covered by the Act.

2. Lie low and hope not to be discovered. A recent article in a Queensland newspaper said that families caught who do not have dispensation could possibly have their children taken from them by the Welfare Department. Carolyn Gibbs of Noosa Heads has written to the Education Minister re this statement and part of the letter from his senior policy advisor Michael Stephenson states *"Whether the Department of Education seeks prosecution in such cases, as provided for in Section 61, is a matter for the Minister's discretion. Should the Department choose to prosecute, the matter would then become one for the police to pursue through the court. The Department of Family Services .... might become involved at this stage".*

3. In his latest newsletter Frank Marrett of Werribee has also written to the Minister requesting information re: Section 58 (e) *"that there is any other reason that in the opinion of the Minister is valid."* Frank is of the opinion that a valid reason is an objection to dispensation on religious grounds and has asked the Minister if this qualifies. I cannot see why any strongly argued case could not be determined as valid. THIS IS VERY INTERESTING and ignorantly I did not notice it previously! Thank you Frank ! John Peacock in his recent magazine published a letter from a lady who stated that she couldn't afford the Dist. Educ. program and she hadn't heard from anyone since - another valid reason?

ACTION

What right has any government to deny parents the right to home educate ? Many people believe that now is the time to do something about this. We have been told that there are impending changes in different pieces of legislation to meet social justice issues in Queensland and that possibly homeschooling will be considered as one of these. We must tell the Premier Wayne Goss and the Education Minister Paul Braddy now so that they know we want change.

INTERESTING

In N.S.W there are about 650 registrations for h/sing. Mr. Braddy's figures for home education in QLD are 25 with 8 refusals in 1992.

A MEETING WITH THE QUEENSLAND HOME SCHOOL STATE REVIEW COMMITTEE 27th July 1992

Our family has often considered living in Qld permanently but one of our most serious concerns about moving was our ability to homeschool there. With this in mind I started to write to Mr Braddy - my first letter was 28 March 1991, hoping to convince him to change the homeschooling requirements in his State. As I am not a teacher, would not employ one and will not use Dist.

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Educ. programs.

I started writing after taking advice and enlisting the support of two people I greatly admire and respect, Bob Osmak of the Qld. Homeschooling Assoc. and Dr Barry Harker of James Cook University, Townsville. In every letter I wrote, we three requested that we be invited to meet with the Minister to discuss our joint concerns. At no time did I say that I was representative of all homeschoolers. It is totally impossible to represent all homeschoolers because, thankfully, we are a diverse and independent lot. However Bob Osmak, Barry Harker and I did want to speak to the Minister for ourselves and for those who enlisted us to fight their cause because they were too scared to be heard. I had no great plans for change or any particular agenda. Those who know me from seminars are well aware that I believe all children have the right to an education and all parents have the right to provide that education.

In my opinion everyone, no matter what their background, resources or methods, should be entitled to homeschool . I just decided to be the woman who didn't giveup and knocked at the door so loud and for so long that the judge had to let her in. In every letter I tried to think up another issue to break down the barriers.

I asked about denial of natural justice, quoted the Declaration of Human Rights, prepared a submission about the range of alternatives that people use when homeschooling and the great results gained, sent books, a video and research papers. Mostly I asked LOTS of questions. Such as, why are A.C.E families not prosecuted given that they are technically in contravention of the law? (I believed, perhaps wrongly, the real reason for non-prosecution of A.C.E. families was because the A.C.A is a very active and strong organisation that has always used much foresight in protecting its families) I also suggested that perhaps it was just that A.C.E had a structured program ? Would a structured program be acceptable?- Not that I was prepared to take this option for myself as I homeschool in an unstructured manner, but because I wanted to elicit from the Department people (who always advise Ministers on their replies) just what it was that they were concerned that parents couldn't do and teachers could.

In the meantime I was still getting regular phone calls from Queenslanders who wanted to homeschool, who were getting hassled, who did not feel able to hide or did not want to use A.C.E (Carolyn Gibbs says the same thing in her recent newsletter), so I kept on going and lo and behold I was recently asked to meet with the Home School State Review Committee. While I do not want to be accused of looking a gift horse in the mouth I have a great problem with this meeting for a few reasons.

1.The H.S.S.R.C. has absolutely no mandate to either change things or advise the minister to change anything.

2. While Alan Mulaly on the Committee is sympathetic to homeschooling I see it as a denial of natural justice that I have to present my homeschooling case to representatives of parents' organisations who may or may not be philosophically opposed to homeschooling. These are not the people to whom we should be talking as the Minister is the correct person to consider the issues.

3. I see this as a possible delaying tactic given the present injustice is an issue that needs to be addressed now.

4. I don't want to downplay the importance of the enormous homeschooling issue, which I feel the Minister has already done by only allowing a one hour meeting. Furthermore I was invited on my own, not with Bob Osmak despite his devotion to the homeschooling cause (though I go with his blessing) and not with Dr Harker as he had only 2 days in Brisbane in July which we had advised the Minister about a month before.

AGENDA AT THE MEETING

So I am going to go to the meeting with a challenge - I intend to come out with a commitment, and Sue Macqueen has given me the impression that this is possible, with a recommendation that the issue of homeschooling be opened to all those people who have written to the Minsiter about the issue (and others) who want to discuss the whole issue AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

Also I am going to answer any questions the Committee presents to me about what I know about homeschooling practice, research, facts, figures and laws around Australia and our family's homeschooling. I make no apologies for the fact that I am addressing the Committee, while it is not my first choice of options it is still one more step towards some acknowledgment by the Minister that something needs to be done about homeschooling in Qld and needs to be done now.

I would like to encourage everyone to write with the same persistence as I did. The more of us that answer questions about our own homeschooling in the Committee the more they will see homeschooling as the diverse and important , high quality, alternative education option that it is.

WHAT YOU MIGHT LIKE TO DO

1. Write (or fax) a letter to Mr. Paul Braddy at P.O. Box 33 Brisbane North Quay 4002 Fax (07) 229 6562 and tell him what you think of the Queensland legislation and the injustice that it perpetrates. Spell out in a simple and short manner your personal grievances.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Become a part of local , state and national support groups to stay informed about options and progress towards change. Not all individuals & groups like to have their names published but I will happily put people in contact with those few others I know if they request it and send a self addressed stamped envelope.

TASMANIA

When the law or regulations concerning homeschooling are not good we can often point immediately to the fact that the bureaucrats concerned had little or no contact with homeschoolers and little or no understanding of the philosophy and practice of home education when the law and regulations were being formulated.

GETTING WHAT YOU WANT

However this is not always the case. In N.S.W we broke our necks at every turn for two and a half years to make sure that every relevant person from the Minister down knew how we all felt when our N.S.W legislation was changing. While we gained some concessions, of which we are proud, there are many areas that are FAR less than we would have liked. In the area of the formulation of the law we were both successful and unsuccessful and in the area of regulations we believe that lots of negotiation and understanding plus a very healthy ongoing dialogue has enabled us to achieve a great deal.

THE WORKING PARTY IN TASMANIA

I sense from John Peacock's editorial in a recent issue of Home Education that he was somewhat frustrated (strong enough?) by the process of being a part of the Tasmanian Working Party that investigated home education. After reading the results of that Working Party in the most recent issue of Frank Marrett's Christian Family Homeschool Magazine I can see why. John and the others on the committee would have fought long and hard for parents' rights and less control of homeschooling and that is not the impression that I get that the report is recommending. Furthermore, whether the Minister or the working Committee itself is responsible I am not sure but a copy of this report has been sent to every Minister and Education Department throughout Australia, giving the impression that it is some sort of definitive study of homeschooling. Both politicians and administrators in other States have already started quoting the conclusions of this far from exhaustive study of homeschooling to us at an official level as if it were accepted knowledge and the conclusions accepted by all homeschoolers, when this is definitely NOT the case. It seems that unless homeschoolers are continually bombarding the authorities with information it is always possible that misinformation can rule the day.

NEW SOUTH WALES

The number of registered homeschoolers and conscientious objectors in N.S.W is increasing all the time. We are around 650 registered (not including conscientious objectors) as at June 1992. The administration of homeschooling continues to be excellent with all people very pleased about their dealings with authorised persons.

ACCESS TO Q STORES / EDUCATION DEPARTMENT STORES

Later in this newsletter you will read the interesting news that homeschoolers will have restricted access to the stores used by schools. Should anyone desire to thank the Minister for this option her address is P.O. Box 33 G.P.O. Sydney 2001

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WEST AUSTRALIA

The West Australian Education Act 1928-81 says " 14. Any of the following reasons shall be deemed a reasonable excuse:— (a) That a child is under regular and efficient instruction at home or elsewhere of which fact notice in writing has been given by the parents or parent to the Director-General not more than fourteen days after such instruction is commenced or not more than fourteen days after the date when the parents or parent would be in the ordinary course obliged under section thirteen of this Act to send the child to a Government or efficient school; and whether such instruction is efficient or not shall be a matter for the decision of the Minister, who may require the report of a Superintendent of Education thereon. (The other relevant section is section 16 which says that a child between the ages of 6 & 15 must attend school unless "there is a reasonable excuse" - section 14 is the definition of a reasonable excuse.) The Education Act Regulations 1960 state 8. (1) "Where a parent of a child who has not reached leaving age informs a welfare officer or the chief executive officer that the child is under regular and efficient instruction at home or elsewhere, a Superintendent may, after examining the child, grant that child a certificate exempting him from attending school. (2) (a) A certificate so granted may be cancelled, by notice in writing served on a parent of the child by the Chief Executive Officer if it appears to him that there has been an alteration of the circumstances under which the certificate was granted........".

BAD THINGS ABOUT THIS LAW

1.The ultimate recourse to justice is the Minister, who decides the definition of "regular" and "efficient" with a "District Superintendent and the Chief Executive Officer". This is a denial of natural justice.

2. It gives those people with a vested interest in one form of education, "institutionalised" education, the right to decide to certificate others who reject their form of "schooling' in the first place.

3. There have been successful prosecutions in 1991 and 1992, not because the families concerned weren't educating well but because they were not fulfilling an individual District Superintendent's definition of "program, learning, achievement etc." and because they were bullied into sending their children back to school. They were prosecuted unjustly under theWelfare Act.

POSSIBLE GOOD THINGS ABOUT THIS LAW

1. There are many people who have been homeschooling for years under this Act with little or no trouble.

2. If or when the Minister denies the right to homeschool, it is the Minister's responsibility to prosecute the family. We believe that this requires that the Minister must prove to a magistrate that a family is not giving regular and efficient instruction. If the magistrate is open minded and just and not just in the business of ensuring that the Minister's will is fulfilled, a committed homeschooling family could easily prove regular and efficient instruction albeit at the cost of time, energy, lawyers and stress.

WEST AUSTRALIAN REALITIES

The W.A. Ministry of Education has recently released a 17 page policy entitled "Procedures for Ministry Officers Authorising Home Tuition in West Australia 1992" and "Advice to Parents Considering Home Tuition in West Australia 1992". These procedures come about possibly as a reaction to an increasing number of parents in W.A. applying for exemption and as a result of submissions by homeschooling individuals and groups as a reaction to a draft policy first released in 1990. The Chairman of the Committee set up to study the submissions was Gail Wyatt.

POLICY NOT REFLECTIVE OF SUBMISSIONS

While written submissions were received on the policy, regular application by homeschooling individuals and groups to address the Committee and the Minister were refused. It is true to say that the new policy is not at all representative nor reflective of any of the submissions that were put to the Committee. It is also true to say that the new policy is even more restrictive and open to horrible interpretation than the draft policy. It is interesting to note that now that the policy is in place and being interpreted in a most heavy handed and discriminatory manner by some District Superintendents, the Minister has only most recently directed Gail Wyatt (not a Ministry employee but on a private contract) to finally make contact with homeschoolers on the issues that concern them.

RESTRICTIVE AND DISCRIMINATORY

The West Australian regulations are appalling and apply to homeschoolers restrictive and discriminatory obligations that are not applied to teachers nor schools in W.A. Furthermore there is no allowance for anything other than a "school type" program and parents are required to demonstrate intangible and subjective proofs that their children are learning to the satisfaction of the officer concerned. For instance *"Students on home learning will be expected to maintain an appropriate rate of learning"* (Attachment 2) "If parents fail to demonstrate the above to a nominated Ministry Officer then approval for home tuition will be withdrawn" . Yet in a recent case approval was withdrawn and one of the reasons verbalised by the Superintendent was because the family had a child who had accelerated in the area of Maths since being homeschooled. The officer considered this advancement inappropriate.

REFUSALS

It is easy to assume that those people being refused permission in W.A. are perhaps in some way inefficient or inadequate but I can assure this is not the case. I have extremely close knowledge of more than 100 programs and approvals for home tuition in N.S.W and many of the refused W.A.

applicants and their paperwork would be considered excessive in N.S.W. I have copies of the W.A. programs and have been integrating with some of these highly educated, motivated and committed parents closely and I personally cannot believe that these parents are being refused the right to home educate unless the Minister has a deliberate policy of limiting homeschooling in W.A. However real exposure of the NEW policy will come in December when many long term successful and experienced homeschoolers will be forced to submit to the new "trial" procedures.

WHAT TO DO?

1. CAREFULLY READ THE ACT AND THE POLICY

Get a copy of the "Procedures" sent to you from the Ministry. Read them carefully, write down in the strongest terms your objections and post a copy of your objections to the Premier Carmen Lawrence. We have all tried on numerous occasions to meet with the Minister for Education Kay Hallahan. Not only does she not reply to letters or answer our questions but she refuses to see any homeschooling representatives. Despite being required to do so by W.A. law she has not in reality consulted with the special interest groups effected by the policy This policy has been totally conceived with the intention of limiting, restricting and possibly removing the option of homeschooling.

2. WRITE TO THE PREMIER

It is time to be as politically adept as were the Victorians and use the fact that the Labor government in W.A. is teetering on the brink of scandal and has a very slim majority to get the politicians to listen to home educators' concerns. Dr. Carmen Lawrence, the Premier, is an intelligent and well-educated woman who should be able to see that it is highly discriminatory to apply to homeschoolers arbitrary and discriminatory requirements not required of schools. She has stated in the past to Homeschoolers Australia that she is open to the idea of home education so we must give her as much information as possible and apply as much pressure as is necessary to ensure that the perfectly workable and adequate situation that existed before 1992 be returned to immediately.

3. SUPPORT GROUPS

Join local, state and national groups to keep informed . Local W.A. people to contact are

Sue Warner 18 Coogan Ave Greenmount 6056.
Leonie Westonberg 4 Herdsman Pde Wembley 6014
Gina Wright P.O. Box 334 Denmark 6333 098 481 671
Mei Cheng 16/70 Broadway Nedlands 6000
Lyn Gould P.O. Box 60 Tambellup 6320 098 258219
Karen Lawtie P.O. Box 339 Donnybrook 6239

4. WRITE TO THE OPPOSITION

The Shadow Minister for Education, the Liberal Fred Tubby has been kept appraised of the situation since November last year and is supportive of homeschoolers and their right to undertake this option. It is his written opinion that the present Minister does intend to limit homeschooling in W.A. and it is his stated intention to change this should he get into power. However, Fred Tubby too needs to be educated. He thinks the N.S.W law is a good option and the Working Party in Tasmania on Home Education had the right ideas (I disagree strongly with both of these assumptions) and these would be good models for W.A - they would NOT. The Law as it exists in W.A. presently is MUCH better than the one that exists here in N.S.W., though our administration is excellent.

I heartily encourage you to do something about home education in W.A. now.

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EARLY MORNING RAID - CHILDREN TAKEN FROM THEIR PARENTS

A BRIEF OVERVIEW by Jo-Anne Beirne

Most people will have seen or heard headlines like the above in newspapers, on T.V. and radio in May. For all committed parents everywhere the very thought that their children could be forcibly removed strikes to the very core of our beings.

SOCIAL WORKERS

I count myself as one of the great many people involved in the homeschooling movement who have a deep and suspicious distrust of some social workers. While idealistically I see that a good society feels it must make sure that all citizens that are possibly being mistreated are looked after, I strongly object to the idea of paid "social workers" as police force and arbiters and guardians of the rights and morals of a community.

It is my strong belief that if our society put as much money, commitment, manpower and energy into supporting families as the basic unit of a healthy society then we would have a more moral, ethical, efficient, safe and pleasant world and a lot less need for social workers & psychologists.

DISCRIMINATION

How does one simply define a good parent, a good educator, a good child ? And whose responsibility is it to provide the definition ? As homeschoolers we are all very aware of discrimination, we know what it feels like to have people think of us as criminals just because we decide not to send our children to school. To be different is to be suspect and in a society that values conformity to a "media" picture of the perfect nuclear family (both parents at work, baby in day care) and its rules and methods some of us are already "weird" and "suspect".

OBSERVATIONS

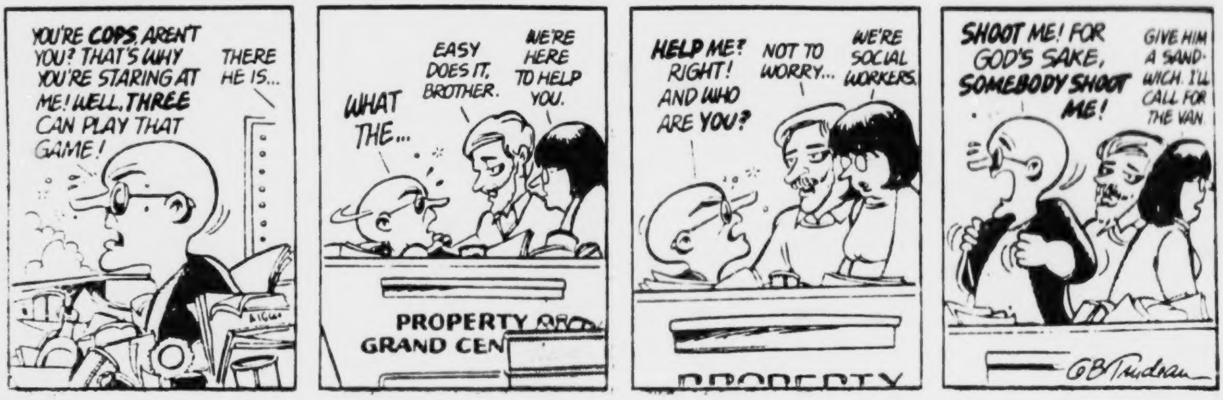
Over a period of time I have had personal contact with the families whose children were removed from their homes at 6 a.m in the morning. While we would undoubtedly not see eye to eye on every issue, (I don't see eye to eye with many people on anything) my contact with them has shown me that they are families who are now following a strong basic Christian philosophy and they care most sincerely about the welfare of their children. It has been my personal experience that they are well informed about educational and other issues and while conservative (many of us are) I would not have considered it possible that they would ever be accused or treated in such a horrendous manner.

ATTITUDES

Many of us are guilty of believing the information that the media feeds us without checking it out first, often it is impossible to check. Caring, committed parents are especially frightened when they may be "seen" to be like someone who has been "tainted" in some way. Of course in this day and age, with the media it is a case of "guilty until proven innocent " instead of the other way around with no thought to the pain and suffering involved of all concerned.

BEING DIFFERENT

The big problem for these families is that they are "different" from the people who live on E Street, in the T.V. soaps, in the minds of the advertising executives and compared to the standard definitions the media and social workers are used to. First they have large families (more than 5 children is the norm). Second, they live in a commune situation sharing community, work and worship. Thirdly, they are fairly isolated, if one can describe weekly contact with 30 other families as isolated. Fourth, they don't send their children to school, having homeschooled over a long period of time because most of them are recent arrivals in Australia after returning from work as missionaries in Asian countries. [Please note: They used to belong to the Children of God, which is now a disbanded organisation. If you want the printed information about their beliefs please contact them through the address at the end of this article.]


YOU'RE COPS, AREN'T YOU? THAT'S WHY YOU'RE STARING AT ME! WELL, THREE CAN PLAY THAT GAME!
THERE HE IS...
WHAT THE...
EASY DOES IT, BROTHER.
WE'RE HERE TO HELP YOU.
PROPERTY
GRAND CEN
HELP ME? RIGHT! AND WHO ARE YOU?
NOT TO WORRY...
WE'RE SOCIAL WORKERS.
PROPERTY
SHOOT ME! FOR GOD'S SAKE, SOMEBODY SHOOT ME!
GIVE HIM A SANDWICH. I'LL CALL FOR THE VAN.
GB Trudeau

DOES IT AFFECT HOMESCHOOLING IN N.S.W ?

At the time of the community services action in N.S.W, some of the families involved had been registered as homeschoolers by the Board of Studies and the others were in the process of being registered, after only recently being informed as to the requirements of the law. One of the "authorised" persons concerned in registering those "legal" families was subpoenaed to appear in court and he (Don Haddon) testified that the families were in fact providing education for their children as required under the N.S.W Education Reform Act.

I believe it is the view of the Minister for Education, which was reiterated by Don Haddon and has been always held by me that the education of registered children IS NOT an issue with which Community Services social workers had any right to be concerned. In N.S.W the Welfare Act and the Education Act are separate entities.

JUSTICE

The authorities concerned did test even the very young children in many areas while they had them in custody. Young and older children were interrogated alone for long periods of time. They were assessed for physical, emotional and sexual abuse and their academic abilities were also tested. We believe these tests showed nothing. In fact on a personal and academic level we believe the children both here and in Vic. have impressed their inquisitors. The people from Community Services have continual, regular access to these peoples' homes and children while they are awaiting trial.

NOW WHAT?

It is of course up to the court to ultimately decide the conclusion of this appalling situation. It is vey easy to take the "media" view of all this and be against the families. It is very hard for me who sees them and their children often enough to believe they are innocent to do so. I don't want this situation to happen again and I don't want to live in fear that my kids can be taken because I am different to the perceived norm and some government or social worker may decide they don't like the way I bring up my children.

I can't imagine how traumatised and fearful these children must feel after being dragged out of their beds and taken away early in the morning, (shoeless in most cases!). I can sympathise with the horror and pain of the parents who would have given anything to get their kids back - "what ransom can we pay?" To feel powerless is horrible but to be forced into the situation of being "on the run" to stop this sort of thing happening is just as bad. I don't have any answers but I do have a million accusing questions.

COURT CASE

On 27th July 1992 the case against these families will be heard in Cobham Childrens' Court. (Which has been refurbished for the occasion while Legal Aid has denied the familes enough legal representation.) I am told it is a very small court room but you are more than welcome to attend to observe the proceedings if you desire to do so.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CONTACT THE FAMILIES INVOLVED THEIR contact person is Bev Hartingdon c/-P.O. BOX 1617 MACQUARIE CENTER 2113

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Homeschoolers Australia is delighted to be able to announce that we are the Australian agents for John Holt's Book and Music Store.

Until we are completely organised and have a big enough volume of books shipped here from the U.S. there will be some delays between orders and delivery. However we plan as soon as we have enough stock and are more knowledgeable about what books Australians want that we will be able to ensure that waiting time is kept to a minimum. We only intend to keep those books that are not readily available or not available at all here in Australia and are of specific concern to homeschoolers.

Everyone on our mailing list will be sent a catalogue of the books available as soon as it is ready. We intend to print regular books reviews especially of the great books that Patrick Farenga, Susannah Sheffer, Donna Richoux and all at Holt Associates are continually adding to their list.

SAMPLES OF **Growing Without Schooling magazine (G.W.S)**

* Would you like to see a sample of the magazine that so many homeschoolers rave about ? As a special introductory offer for those who would like to find out more we are offering a single sample/ family posted for $4 !!! [A single issue of G.W.S. usually costs $U.S.4.50 about $ 6 Australian] If you are interested please send your cheque to Homeschoolers Australia pty ltd P.O. Box 420 Kellyville 2153.

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John Holt's Book and Music Store

IN AUSTRALIA

TRAVELING HOME SCHOOLER
Jenifer Goldman
1991
RISE UP SINGING
Country & Blues HARMO

CHILD'S WORK: Taking children's choices seriously.

Nancy's first book, *Better Than School*, made her one of the home-schooling movement's most popular writers. Now, in *Child's Work*, she continues her story by looking at what happens when children are allowed to spend years making their own decisions about how to make sense of and explore the world. The book is about how Nancy's children grew up and found work they loved; it is also about how Nancy learned to take the work of childhood seriously. Much interesting discussion of how children learn math and writing, why our traditional assumptions about the need for a peer group don't always make sense, and how children gain independence and move out into the wider world. Jean Liedloff, author of *The Continuum Concept*, writes, "Would that every parent and educator might read *Child's Work*."

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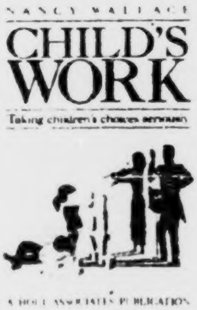
NANCY WALLACE
CHILD'S WORK
Taking children's choices seriously
A HOLT ASSOCIATES PUBLICATION

2ND PRINTING!

RAVE REVIEWS!

"...You will discover incredible respect for the individual ways in which children learn. Wallace, author of *Better Than School*, is an important voice to consider, whether you are homeschooling or not."

— *Mothering*, Spring 1991

"...Interesting and expresses significant insights... In all, the book is worth thoughtful reading. Some of us drill sergeants can learn more sensitivity to a few basic human principles."

—Ted Wade, *The Home School Manual*

"*Child's Work* is written with refreshing honesty and vitality, as Wallace tells how she combines humility and passion in her own, and her children's, learning."

— *Focus On Books*, Winter 1991

"Wallace's central point... should be shouted from rooftops: children should be allowed more opportunity to pursue their own interests and their own work... I'm tempted to carry copies of Wallace's chapter on 'socialization' with me to field that oft-asked question about my own homeschooled children..."

—*The Cleveland Edition*, 1/10/91

"Parents, teachers, and other adults who play important roles in the lives of children will be touched by this story and reminded that they are the most significant building materials children have for constructing knowledge and an understanding of the world."

— *Changing Schools*, 2/91

"An important book for parents, teachers, and anyone interested in learning from and about children."

— *Small Press Reviews*, 1/90

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Children Learning at Home

by Julie Webb #1586 **$40 + $4.70 postageN.S.W**
$7.50 other states

This is a study of home education in Great Britain, but it has much information that will benefit homeschoolers in the United States, too. Writing in an accessible, narrative style, Julie Webb traces the theoretical and historical background of homeschooling in England, and then explains how she chose and structured her research model. Her interviews over an 18-month period were primarily with homeschoolers associated with the British group Education Otherwise and with school officials who handled homeschooling issues. Webb uses an ethnograhic approach, presenting people's own words in transcripts from interviews and tying them together with her commentary and observations. This approach makes the book accessible to the general reader, and by presenting the wide variety of motivations and characteristics of homeschoolers in their own words, it allows readers to garner specific ideas about how children learn and how parents can help them.

Many of the families interviewed came to home education as a last resort. Their decision was not based on wholehearted belief in homeschooling as a positive alternative, but rather on the belief that it was better than the alternative of school. Julie Webb writes, "Those I interviewed had generally been forced to look for an alternative by the inflexibility or other unsuitability of available schools, in particular, usually, the one their children attended. This was so even where the parents had a predisposition to consider alternative education by reason of their personal background."

An interesting section of the book shows how some families actively involved their children in the homeschooling decision, "giving the child some power over his own future education." Another section focuses on "Family Influence on the Choice of What to Learn," examining qualifications and credentials of homeschooling parents and children, both self-imposed and state-imposed. Interesting interviews and later follow-ups with families who don't follow set curricula show that their children are not at a disadvantage when it comes to going to college or entering the world of adult work:

> The home-educated child's option to disregard academic criteria and set his own standards in terms of attainment of skills is a valuable alternative... This extract from an adviser's report about a teenage boy whose parents decided to complete his education at home illustrates the variety of job-oriented skills that may be obtained this way: "Schools cannot always provide ideal conditions for all learning and certainly cannot provide the context in which Peter is operating. He is looking after a sizable vegetable garden single-handed and has plans to extend considerably onto other land owned by the family. He has numerous animals to care for, he is playing the organ in the next-door church and the piano at home, and he also does some composing. He reads a lot, both for pleasure and factual books about farming and natural studies, and is following a correspondence course in gardening for adults with comparative ease."

Julie Webb ends her work with some interesting ideas about how homeschooling bears upon orthodox educational systems. It may require a little effort, however, for Americans to think of equivalents of the specific British programs to which she refers.

Children Learning at Home is based on research done using the 1984 Education Otherwise contact list, which at the time had roughly 200 families on it. A recent visitor to our office from Great Britain told us that there are now considerably more families homeschooling in Great Britain, so this study is based on a small sample compared to what could be done today. Nevertheless, this book provides useful qualitative descriptions and is a good example of a type of academic research that is very different from the quantitative surveys and test score studies that dominate research in the U.S. — Pat Farenga

A Time to Fly Free

by Stephanie Tolan #1634 **$9 + $2.80 postage**

Years ago John Holt read *A Time to Fly Free*, Stephanie Tolan's fictional story about a fifth grade boy who becomes a homeschooler, and went so far as to make notes for a review of the book before he learned that it had gone out of print. When the book came back in print last year, we immediately added it to our catalog and interviewed the author for GWS #83 to learn about how her own experiences had led her to write the book.

John's notes give a lot of clues about why he thought so highly of the book. He wrote:

> This is the first book I have read that really looks into the mind of a child, a 10-year-old boy, who hates school - is bored by it, puzzled by it, angered by its deliberate failure, indeed refusal, to think responsibly about what it does, to make distinctions between what is and what is not important.
>
> Schools, at the very least school texts, treat children as if they were all stupid. The result is to make many of them act stupid, and many more feel stupid. Those who will neither feel nor pretend to be stupid, like Joshua, the hero of this book, go almost crazy with boredom, anger, despair.
>
> I ask myself, why was I, a supposedly fairly bright kid, able to stand school as Josh could not. I was bored with school from the age of 8 on. Why did I not worry about it or resist it more? One reason is that there were so few other things I was interested in or cared about. At the age of 9 and 10 I did only two things I cared about - making model airplanes (at home) and playing football with a small group of other boys, not in school. By two years later, when I was young for my grade and small for my age, I was clearly not going to be a football player. For the rest of my schooling I did only two things with all my heart - listen to jazz music,

> and play squash racquets. If I had had a real life, as Josh did, and if school had taken me away from it, it would have driven me crazy. But I did not, so I adjusted, as schools are supposed to make you adjust, to the boredom.
>
> Now that I have a real life, now that I have known real work, real thought, real learning, to have to spend time in a school would drive me as crazy as it did Josh. What happens to kids like Josh who, unlike him, cannot escape from school? Many of them find their real life in fighting school.

In the years since *A Time To Fly Free* was published and John Holt made these notes, very few other books have been published that take a child's dislike of school seriously. *A Time to Fly Free* still stands out in this respect. The book doesn't betray Josh or the readers who identify with him by having some adult convince him that staying in school is better than leaving or even that he ought to go back once he has left. Although his mother has many of the usual concerns about homeschooling, his stepfather joins Josh in convincing her to let him try it. By the end of the book it has become so clear that Josh is thriving outside of school that his mother can't ignore it, and I doubt skeptical readers will be able to, either.

After only a couple of days of being out of school, Josh has this realization:

> The time didn't matter! There was no bus waiting for him. No bell would ring. He was free! His schedule was no more demanding than the tides. He had what he'd always wanted more than anything in the world - *time.*

And in answer to the question of what this boy will do with so much time, Stephanie Tolan manages to show us Josh's specific choices without suggesting that he is the prototype homeschooler who speaks for everyone. At the same time, Josh's particular example conveys enough of what is possible for everyone that other kids will be able to imagine their own choices.

Josh ends up spending much of his time apprenticing to a man who helps wounded wildlife. He learns a great deal while doing this, of course, and also teaches readers that children who can't bear meaningless schoolwork do thrive on the chance to do real, important work:

> For the next hour, under Rafferty's exacting eye, Josh cleaned cages, learned the names of the birds, and read their charts. He listened eagerly to the stories of their injuries, their illnesses, their capture. When Rafferty looked at his watch and announced that it was well past lunchtime, Josh was surprised. He couldn't remember a morning that had passed so quickly.

I would give *A Time to Fly Free* to homeschoolers who long to see a homeschooling character in a novel. Kids who turned to homeschooling because of difficult school experiences will probably find Josh's story particularly appealing. I would also give the book to kids who are suffering in school, as Josh was. Josh - and, implicitly, the adult author who created him - lets kids know that they *can* fly free, that a life without school really is possible. — Susannah Sheffer

My Life as a Traveling Homeschooler

by Jenifer Goldman #1614 **$20 + $2.80 postage**

Like *A Time to Fly Free*, *My Life as a Traveling Homeschooler* is the story of a child who acts on her dislike of school and manages to make a viable life outside of it. *My Life as a Traveling Homeschooler* is autobiography rather than fiction, however. In it Jenifer Goldman chronicles her unhappy experiences in school and her adventures as a homeschooler who spends most of her time traveling with her uncle. Of her decision to try homeschooling, Jenifer writes:

> Through most of my life school's been pretty miserable. When I started homeschooling, everything got better. ... I've been living in the same house with my nana and my uncle Jerry for many years ... Jerry used to run an alternative school in Vermont. Then Jerry became the director of a company called the NCACS (National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools). So, when I was having trouble in school, Jerry thought that it might be a good idea for me to homeschool for a while. ... Jerry suggested that maybe we could try homeschooling for a few months. I thought it was a good idea, but we had a time trying to get my mom and dad to agree. Finally, we decided that I would try it, for just a few months.

Though Jenifer doesn't devote a lot of space to the question of what it's like to homeschool primarily with an uncle, instead of with one's parents, just the fact that this is what she did may help other families imagine different ways to arrange homeschooling for themselves. Maybe this will help more families feel that homeschooling is a real option.

Meanwhile, Jenifer demonstrates very clearly that homeschooling doesn't have to go on in the home! She learns from what she sees as she rides the train across the country, from the people she meets at homeschooling and alternative schooling conferences, from the conversations she and her uncle have as they travel. At the end of the book she concludes:

> ... Learning while traveling sure beats sitting in an old classroom any time, or sitting around the house. ... You get to explore the world and what it really is. In school they teach math on a piece of paper. But through my travels I got to experience how to use math in real life. Not only math, but just about anything else that I'll need for life, like how to understand people and get along, and how to use language in communication to make contact with people, how to help people with their problems, and how to solve problems. I also learned about current events and what's going on in the world.

Earlier in Jenifer's homeschooling, she and Jerry held a "Question Class" - Jenifer brainstormed all the questions she could think of and then rated those she was most interested in. She and Jerry used those questions as starting points for further study and exploration. Some of Jenifer's questions were, "How does a TV work?" "Who thought of putting pockets in pants?" "Why can't people get along more easily?" "Who invented written music?" "Why do I always dislike my art work, and other people always like it?" "Where did the first languages

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come from? If they couldn't communicate with each other, how could they tell people what they meant?" "How come most grown-ups never understand us kids?"

I love the way Jenifer mingles questions about language, history, science, and music with questions about human behavior and her own emotions. She doesn't separate academic concerns from concerns about being understood by grown-ups or making friends; all her questions have to do with understanding the world in one way or another. No two children's question lists would be the same, but all would contain perfectly good places from which to begin exploring. If only schools would realize that there are as many ways to approach the study of the world as there are children, and would let children begin with their own concerns, interests, and questions. — SS

Dumbing Us Down

by John Taylor Gatto #1588

$20 + $2.80 postage

John Gatto is an award-winning teacher who toiled in Manhattan's public schools for 26 years. At the height of his career, after receiving the New York State Teacher of the Year Award in 1990 from the New York State Senate, John Gatto stunned his audience with his acceptance speech. He said in part:

> I've noticed a fascinating phenomenon in my 25 years of teaching: that schools and schooling are increasingly irrelevant to the great enterprises of the planet.... Although teachers do care and do work very hard, the institution is psychopathic; it has no conscience.

John worked one more year as a public school teacher and then resigned. During that year his acceptance speech was widely circulated and talked about and he was invited to speak at all sorts of events: homeschool, private school, political and industrial. After he resigned from teaching in 1991 he staged "The Exhausted School: A Speakout on Parent-Choice Schools" at Carnegie Hall (see GWS #85), an event he continues to present wherever he can in addition to speaking at other events across the country.

Dumbing Us Down collects four of his most dynamic speeches and his essay about why he became a teacher, "The Green Monongahela." Packed with insight, full of John's personal experiences and his keen knowledge of history, this modest-sized book will engage your thoughts long after you finish it.

Going from public school teacher to the public lectern thrust John into the public spotlight, a role that he claims to be uncomfortable with due to his essentially shy nature. But his shrewd talent with words, and the conviction and power of his thoughts, are what make him so in demand as a speaker:

> Networks like school are not communities, just as school training is not education. By preempting fifty percent of the total time of the young, by locking young people up with other young people exactly their own age, by ringing bells to start and stop work, by asking people to think about the same thing at the same time in the same way, by grading people the way we grade vegetables - and in a dozen other vile and stupid ways - network schools steal the vitality of communities and replace it with an ugly mechanism. No one survives these places with their humanity intact, not kids, not teachers, not administrators, not parents.

John stands out among school reformers because of his ability to synthesize the historical and social antecedents of compulsory schooling and democracy while keeping us aware of the intrinsic tension between these two poles. This is a distinguishing feature of his thought, since most school people think democracy cannot exist without compulsory schooling. John also shows us the variety of choices we have for getting an education and strengthening democracy without coercively schooling people.

Let me leave you with one last quote, from the speech "The Psychopathic School":

> What can be done? First, we need a ferocious national debate that doesn't quit, day after day, year after year, the kind of

	Destination Zone (Based on postcode of destination address – refer to Table 1)														
Mass ☐	Local Rate†	Within 50 km & Sydney N1	Near NSW N2	Nth NSW Sth NSW N3-N4	All Victoria V1 & V2	Brisbane Q1	Near Qld Q2	Mid Qld Q3	Nth Qld Q4	Adelaide S1	Mid & Nth SA S2 & S3	Northern Territory NT1	Perth W1	Sth & Nth WA W2 & W3	Tasmania T1
	$	$	$	$	$	$	$	$	$	$	$	$	$	$	$
Up to 250g	1.30*	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80
Over 250g to 500g	1.30*	2.80	2.80	2.80	2.80	2.80	2.80	2.80	2.80	2.80	2.80	2.80	2.80	2.80	2.80
Over 500g to 1 kg	2.85	4.30	4.60	4.70	6.00	6.00	6.50	6.80	7.00	6.25	6.80	7.85	7.50	7.85	7.50
Over 1 kg to 2 kg	2.85	4.30	4.80	5.00	6.45	6.45	7.45	8.05	8.45	6.95	8.05	10.15	9.45	10.15	9.45
Over 2 kg to 3 kg	2.85	4.30	5.00	5.30	6.90	6.90	8.40	9.30	9.90	7.65	9.30	12.45	11.40	12.45	11.40
Over 3 kg to 4 kg	2.85	4.30	5.20	5.60	7.35	7.35	9.35	10.55	11.35	8.35	10.55	14.75	13.35	14.75	13.35
Over 4 kg to 5 kg	2.85	4.30	5.40	5.90	7.80	7.80	10.30	11.80	12.80	9.05	11.80	17.05	15.30	17.05	15.30
Over 5 kg to 6 kg	2.85	4.30	5.60	6.20	8.25	8.25	11.25	13.05	14.25	9.75	13.05	19.35	17.25	19.35	17.25
Over 6 kg to 7 kg	2.85	4.30	5.80	6.50	8.70	8.70	12.20	14.30	15.70	10.45	14.30	21.65	19.20	21.65	19.20
Over 7 kg to 8 kg	2.85	4.30	6.00	6.80	9.15	9.15	13.15	15.55	17.15	11.15	15.55	23.95	21.15	23.95	21.15
Over 8 kg to 9 kg	2.85	4.30	6.20	7.10	9.60	9.60	14.10	16.80	18.60	11.85	16.80	26.25	23.10	26.25	23.10
Over 9 kg to 10 kg	2.85	4.30	6.40	7.40	10.05	10.05	15.05	18.05	20.05	12.55	18.05	28.55	25.05	28.55	25.05
Over 10 kg to 11 kg	2.85	4.30	6.60	7.70	10.50	10.50	16.00	19.30	21.50	13.25	19.30	30.85	27.00	30.85	27.00
Over 11 kg to 12 kg	2.85	4.30	6.80	8.00	10.95	10.95	16.95	20.55	22.95	13.95	20.55	33.15	28.95	33.15	28.95
Over 12 kg to 13 kg	2.85	4.30	7.00	8.30	11.40	11.40	17.90	21.80	24.40	14.65	21.80	35.45	30.90	35.45	30.90
Over 13 kg to 14 kg	2.85	4.30	7.20	8.60	11.85	11.85	18.85	23.05	25.85	15.35	23.05	37.75	32.85	37.75	32.85
Over 14 kg to 15 kg	2.85	4.30	7.40	8.90	12.30	12.30	19.80	24.30	27.30	16.05	24.30	40.05	34.80	40.05	34.80
Over 15 kg to 16 kg	2.85	4.30	7.60	9.20	12.75	12.75	20.75	25.55	28.75	16.75	25.55	42.35	36.75	42.35	36.75
Over 16 kg to 17 kg	2.85	4.30	7.80	9.50	13.20	13.20	21.70	26.80	30.20	17.45	26.80	44.65	38.70	44.65	38.70
Over 17 kg to 18 kg	2.85	4.30	8.00	9.80	13.65	13.65	22.65	28.05	31.65	18.15	28.05	46.95	40.65	46.95	40.65
Over 18 kg to 19 kg	2.85	4.30	8.20	10.10	14.10	14.10	23.60	29.30	33.10	18.85	29.30	49.25	42.60	49.25	42.60
Over 19 kg to 20 kg	2.85	4.30	8.40	10.40	14.55	14.55	24.55	30.55	34.55	19.55	30.55	51.55	44.55	51.55	44.55

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continuous debate that journalism finds boring. We need to scream and argue about this school thing until it is fixed or broken beyond repair, one or the other. If we can fix it, fine; if we cannot, then the success of homeschooling shows a different road that has great promise. Pouring the money we now pour into schooling back into family education might cure two ailments with one medicine, repairing families as it repairs children.

— Pat Farenga

The Long Haul

by Myles Horton #1606 **$24 + $2.80 postage**

Before I read *The Long Haul* (on the recommendation GWS reader), I had only a vague idea of what the Highland Center was - someplace that promoted Appalachian culture, thought - and knew nothing of its founder, whose autobiogr phy this book is. In fact, Horton says he consciously decide avoid becoming a celebrity, as he found that charismatic leaders tended to create disciples and followers instead of o leaders.

With so little to go on, I was surprised and delighted to find the book to be stirring, funny, readable, eye-opening, and thought-provoking. Myles Horton dedicated his life to promoting humane social change and acting in accordance with his theories, with some notable successes to his credit.

Born in 1905, Horton grew up in Tennessee with parents who, he said, "taught me by their actions that you are supposed to serve your fellow men, you're supposed to do something worthwhile with your life, and education is meant to help you do something for others." His first paying jobs led to a growing dissatisfaction with social and economic injustice, and he eventually left Appalachia for a few years in search of ways to live a moral life in what he perceived to be an immoral society.

He pursued this education on his own terms - he spent most of his college years reading in the library and ignored the graduation requirements, and he studied world religions, philosophy, and education always with the idea of what he could bring back to his home region. His inquisitiveness finally led him to Denmark to see the "folk schools," a form of adult education in which the students set up the agenda and run the program. He realized here was a practical, small-scale model consistent with his values that he could bring home and use to encourage his fellow Southerners to solve their problems.

He and some friends started the Highlander Center in 1932 on a shoestring. They invited people from the labor movement to short workshops; the school provided food, folk dancing, singing, and a chance to share ideas and ask for information. As the school was racially integrated, unusual and even illegal in the South at that time, it also became a starting place for the Civil Rights movement and a major influence in its development. Though the Highlander staff faced dangers (death threats, accusations of being Communists, firebombs, etc.), the school survived to, in Horton's phrase, "multiply leadership for radical social change."

Some notable examples of the staff's success in civil rights: (1) Horton, along with Septima Clark, invented the notion of "Citizenship Schools," where thousands of blacks taught each other to read in small groups, in homes or back rooms of stores, in order to pass voting tests. (2) Rosa Parks attended a Highlander workshop shortly before she refused to give up her seat to a white man on a Montgomery bus, launching the civil rights movement. She had gained the strength during the workshop to act in accordance with her convictions. (3) "We Shall Overcome," the famous anthem of the movement, was adapted by Horton's wife Zilphia from a hymn, and later added to by many others.

Although Horton acknowledged that Highlander has not since been involved with any social movements as large and fast-moving as civil rights, it continues to help grassroots organizations form and strengthen. For example, it aided a group of welfare women in West Virginia to organize, help each other, and eventually get an improved welfare law passed in the state. In another project, it encouraged ordinary people to dig through mounds of paperwork to discover who really owned Appalachia and was letting it be strip-mined.

I'll end with a few of the many observations and conclusions Horton made about his experiences:

> It made no sense, however, to work with poor people who had given up hope. Only people with hope will struggle... If people are suffering and exploited and want to get out from under the heel of oppression, if they have hope that it can be done, if they can see a path that leads to a solution, a path that makes sense to them and is consistent with their beliefs and their experience, then they'll move. But it must be a path that they've started clearing...
>
> You couldn't, through mere discussion, persuade people to have a change of heart and to give up their biases... But the civil rights movement started forcing people to change their actions... People were forced to adjust their minds to what they had to do. And their hearts came poking along later...
>
> Instead of thinking that you put pieces together that will add up to a whole, I think you have to start with the premise that they are already together and you try to keep from destroying life by segmenting it, overorganizing it and dehumanizing it.
>
> [On the Appalachian Land Ownership Task Force:] To my way of thinking, the most important thing was that these people got a sense of their own power to do something, and could then use that method to research any kind of problem.

Anybody who has spent his life in this blend of action and thoughtfulness has much to say from which we can all profit.

— Donna Richoux

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Back Issues: We strongly urge you to get the back issues of GWS, especially if you plan to begin homeschooling.

The cost of postage depends on the weight of the article and its destination, in the catalogue,and from the next edition of the A.H.J. I will be printing the weight of all the books and a table of postage.

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HOMESCHOOLING OVER TIME

by Susan Crossley

(A soon to be mother of five)

YEAR 1

We have been homeschooling for four years now and over this time I have been greatly encouraged through reading about other people's experiences in homeschooling and as a result I have decided to write this article in the hope that it too may encourage others who are also educating their children from the home.

Since we began homeschooling many of my former attitudes to education, roles of mother, father and children within the family have changed. However, my initial reasons for homeschooling our children have not altered and have, in fact, become more significant.

I have been trained as a primary school teacher and taught for three years in a high school before having my own children. My husband is also a teacher. Our three children all went to school until the eldest was in Year 4, our second in Year 3 and our third in Kindergarten so we all had definite ideas of how education should happen. We withdrew our children from their school half way through the school year.

Having such a "schoolish" background I imagined homeschool would be just like school except at home with a loving mother giving instruction at each child's individual level and with heaps more individual time for each child. Consequently we lined our garage and set it up as our schoolroom and that is where we did our school work, from 9am to 12 noon almost every week day. The children had a workbook for every subject and we did lots and lots of written work. However, we all agreed that it was heaps preferable to going to school and we were all happier than formerly.

In between teaching the children I also ran our house, cooked the meals, washed and cleaned with the children doing a little to help and also keeping their own rooms clean and tidy. My memory of that year is rushing in and out to the laundry with wet washing and finally getting it all on the line by lunchtime, which in our climate, (Southern Tablelands N.S.W) especially in winter months, allows for very little drying. I then read "Homeschool Burn Out" by the Moores and as a consequence we then divided our school terms into 4 weeks of work and 1 week off when we all could follow personal interests. In those "off" weeks I noticed that the children's natural creativity surfaced and they definitely learned heaps! Another lesson for mother!

YEAR TWO

In our second year of homeschooling we had our fourth child and some organisational changes were made. There was a reallocation of family chores - hanging washing, vacuuming, washing dishes, ironing etc., but the children's attitudes were not good and most of these activities precipitated battles of wills and so many times I just completed the tasks myself.

In our schooling we still followed a curriculum with lots of written work to "prove" to the inspector that we were really working. But rather than having each child follow his/her individual programme we all shared the same learning in areas such as Social Studies and Science but continued graded individual work in the other areas. However, the children resented the amount of work they had to do and so there were many hostile moments.With the birth of our fourth child we had the bedroom reshuffle and no longer had a "school" room, but worked together around the kitchen table, we all found this heaps better.

No longer having a "school" room marked a major change in my attitude to what education was but still the memories of my years of school experiences remained strong and I was slow to change my ideas on what education actually was, believing that subjects needed to be taught in definite ways and atdefinite grade levels. I have since rethought these issues and now strive to have learning readiness and relevance as the reasons for introducing new concepts etc, rather than my former "schoolish-type" graded expectations.

YEAR 3

I then read a "Survivors Guide to Homeschooling" by Luanne Shackelford and Susan White which I found very encouraging and helpful, full of intensely practical suggestions, some of which I incorporated into the running of our home and our homeschool, to the benefit of us all.

I now began to "back-programme" which allowed us the flexibility to follow the children's interests in most areas rather than following a predetermined programme and with far less emphasis on written work.

However, my eldest child was now "doing" Year 7 work and so the pressure was on to maintain a programme with him that was comparable to Year 7 at school and this I did in the areas of Maths, Science, Social Studies and, to some extent, English.

YEAR 4

Now this past year has once again seen gradual changes in us all. Our family is now working as a co-operative unit with the children accepting responsibility for tasks around our home without complaint or having to be driven by me to complete them. Educationally, our older two children are beginning to accept responsibility for their own education, especially in the areas where I have limited ability and knowledge, which has taken lots of pressure off me as the provider of all knowledge.

I continue to back-programme and keep a weekly "day book" rather than writing up what we do daily and this too has been much easier for me and a more realistic approach, allowing for days when we "goof-off". We tend to do only one subject per day, or week, and this allows for interests to be followed for as long as desired and for set work to be completed in a definite time frame rather than going on and on and on! We follow our own interests in as many areas as possible and in so doing have seen lots of untapped talent and interest surface.

This last year has been the most encouraging for me regarding the growth and maturity of our children and their acceptance of how our home and education best suits everyone. However, as our two older children are now in Years 7 and 8, I feel the need to equip them to be able to stand with the other students their own age in the basic subjects English, Maths and Science and so we follow a text book in Maths and Science but skip over repetitive work. I am sure there is a better way but at the moment I need to have the personal assurance that I am not disadvantaging them in these areas and so we continue to use textbooks, supplementing them with library books in these areas. In the other areas of learning we follow personal interests.

In this past year various opportunities have opened for our children to be involved with other people in our community in such areas as work experience one day per week with a mechanic, professional writing lessons, cake decorating lessons with another homeschool mum and sewing lessons with a neighbour. I also recognise that these openings have arisen as a direct result of my changed views on what real education is.

This supplementary learning is in addition to their music lessons and sport activities in which they were already involved. For most of the former activities the children take themselves and so that relieves me from being continually driving children to places and activities, which I find very exhausting.

I used to feel guilty and inadequate in subject areas where I felt I had limited abilities and expertise but now, while recognising that I do still have these limitations, I tend to major on my personal strengths and rely on other people and resources to meet those areas where I feel inadequate. This attitude has been a great relief for me and it works!

The "big" household chores which used to really oppress me e.g. cleaning oven, freezer, fridge, windows, shower, etc., are now tackled on a cyclic pattern of cleaning once per month. This is my plan, but with all such plans it means in reality that most of the tasks will eventually be done perhaps once each three months and I can live with that.

CONCLUSION

Since we began homeschooling we have met with other homeschooling families in our district for weekly playtimes, learning experiences, concerts and children's newsletters. These have provided invaluable experiences for us all. My husband has always been totally supportive of our homeschooling which I am sure has not always been easy for him as he is a teacher in the state school system and of necessity must educate children quite differently from the way we are free to do at home. However, without his constant help, encouragement and support I am not sure that I would have continued. He therefore has been and continues to be an important person in the continuance of our homeschool.

My initial reasons for homeschooling have not altered. As a Christian I still see that my ministry is to my children but the way I have carried this out has changed greatly over the years. I am sure as I see my older children enter the workforce and my younger children grow up that I will change my educational views even more. Perhaps by the time I am a grandmother I may understand more fully what educating children is really all about!

BOOK REVIEW BY JOE RIPOLLES (Proud father of Yvette, Eryn & Kaitlyn)

IN THEIR OWN WAY

by Thomas Armstrong

After reading this book on loan from the local library, I feel that someone has finally shown me the reasons why I didn't do too well in school. I have always felt that I missed the basics and I seemed to be bypassed with comments like"Why aren't you like your big brother,he is always top of the class and does so well at Maths". My brother went on to become an accountant and I continued to be the day dreamer.

On reading this book I discovered why. It shows how in America (I'm sure this applies in Australia too!),the education system is based on two learning styles, Mathematical and Linguistic and if your natural learning style is not one of these,you do not achieve your maximum learning potential. It of course amuses me when people quote averages because whose average are they measuring by?

From memory, there are 7 different learning styles discussed and as you read them you can see your own style and that of your child unfold. One can think of many examples of men and women who were or are brilliant in their field and at some stage of their academic career suffered tags like below average,poor student,disruptive and the current favourite of learning disabled.

The author highlights ways of using a childs main learning style in all fields of learning,it applies well in the home learning/schooling area as well as for those who have their children in the school system. I will certainly be purchasing it for our own library. This book finally released me from embarrassment of my past schooling days of a below average dreamer.

IN THEIR OWN WAY IS AVAILABLE IN SOME BOOKSHOPS AND ALSO FROM THE JOHN HOLT BOOK AND MUSIC STORE C/- HOMESCHOOLES AUSTRALIA P.O. BOX 420 KELLYVILLE 2153 FOR $22 (includes postage)

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STOP PRESS:

N.S.W. HOMESCHOOLERS GIVEN RESTRICTED ACCESS TO EDUCATION DEPARTMENT STORES (commonly called Q stores) BY 1993

* WE HAVE BEEN ASKED TO GIVE NOTHING IN RETURN, NOR WILL WE BE ASKED.

I was delighted to attend a meeting on 7th July 1992 with Bill Hamilton Director Administration; Fred May, Director Q Stores; Don Roberts, Supply Manager N.S.W. Supply Service; Helen Clunas Manager, Contracting Services and Jim Perkins of Contracting Services. The result of this meeting was confirmation that registered N.S.W Homeschoolers will be given significant though partially restricted access to Education Department (Q) stores by 1993.

The Ministers for Education, Virginia Chadwick and Administrative Services, Anne Cohen and these administrators have been swift and superb in facilitating this access for homeschoolers and definitely deserve a note of thanks, as it will entail a good deal of co-ordination, trust and administration work to keep it working.

While all arrangements and requirements have not yet been finalised some details follow and I will be updating the information in the next issue of the Australian Homeschool Journal.

PLEASE NOTE

* It is ILLEGAL to resell government stores or buy them for anyone else. They must be used for the family concerned alone. Abuse of this situation by any individual homeschooler will undoubtedly mean loss of the privilege for all homeschoolers.

* If you wish to avail yourself of this service you must be a registered homeschooler and you must register with Q stores by mail.

* Every six months registered homeschoolers, who choose to buy Q stores products, will be sent a detailed order list from Q stores enabling them to decide what they want to order for use in any of the key learning areas and other basic equipment.

* A minimum order from Q stores will be $100. The issue of payment and invoicing is still being organised as it is likely that prices on large goods, especially computer equipment, could increase marginally between order and delivery.

* Goods will NOT BE DELIVERED to your home but will be able to be picked up from Q stores headquarters at Alexandria and/or 4 other metropolitan nominated pick-up points as well as 6 regional pick up points. The relevant freight charges will be incurred for deliveries to country areas.

* You must submit a copy of your current registration certificate with your order and undertake to inform Q stores within 14 days if you stop homeschooling .

* Goods for purchase will include science, craft, art, mathematics, sports & computer equipment- hardware and software, stationery, encyclopaedias, maps, desks, bookshelves etc.

* Please note that text books are not sold by Q stores.

HOW TO GET THE CATALOGUE

* If you wish to receive the end 1992 Q stores catalogue pleases send you name and address to the following address **HOMESCHOOLERS/ CONTRACTING SERVICES 2-10 Wentworth St Parramatta 2150** as soon as possible.

Q stores CANNOT access the list of Registered Homeschoolers from the Board of Studies as this confidential. So Home Educators wishing to take up this option must register their names, by mail, with Q stores. This will guarantee that those families who wish to remain anonymous can do so.

SPREADING THE NEWS

Given that not everyone gets the AHJ I would like to encourage all homeschoolers to spread the news about access to Q stores so that everyone has the opportunity to choose to take up this option.

IF YOU WISH TO KNOW MORE:

Please send a stamped self-addressed envelope with your questions to P.O. Box 420 Kellyville 2153 and I will do my best to answer your query with help from Helen Clunas of Contracting Services.

ON JUMPING THROUGH HOOPS

Helen Hegener

Most books and articles on home education are quick to point out that homeschooling is legal--in one form or another-- in all fifty states. Parents might have to jump through more hoops in one state than in another, but, as long as they're willing to jump through those hoops, they are allowed to teach their own children at home. But are these hoops actually necessary?

There is a conviction in this country that laws, rules, and regulations are centrally important to maintaining proper social stability. And there is a certainty that laws are necessary to keep "everyone else" from running amok. People who would decry the need for yet another law will also argue the necessity of ensuring that other people behave responsibly. "Legislating thy neighbor" has become a popular approach to living together in this country, and those with the most financial resources to gain adherents to their cause have generally prevailed in the legislative process.

The current homeschooling laws in this country are, at best, a poor compromise between a highly complex, two hundred billion dollar a year industry and the beliefs and principles of a handful of parents. Of those parents, the majority simply welcome the opportunity to homeschool their children and will jump through whatever hoops the Department of Education insists upon. For the most part, these are the same parents who are writing compromises into homeschooling laws. They don't question the state's motives for enacting regulations and accountability measures, much less its interest in determining what constitutes education.

Educational policy in this country is the result of many years of lobbying by powerful education interests, whose dedication is not to children so much as to protecting jobs, increasing benefits, and ensuring political clout. And schools are the foremost tools of social engineering. Gene I. Maeroff, education writer for the *New York Times*, cautions, "Make no mistake. Schools have been viewed by Congress primarily as instruments of social change." The benevolent teacher imparting knowledge to children has been replaced with a combination of psychological goals and restructured intellectual objectives. Schools have become the primary agency for eliminating social ills in this country, and for developing personal integrity and the national character. It has been a masterstroke to veil this design with an inspired long-term public relations campaign that has turned parents into staunch allies by proclaiming that "Education is the key to 'The Good Life!'"

The idea of education as a method of control is not advertised as such, and most people simply think that teaching children to read and write and work with numbers is a good idea, which, of course, it is. This benevolent image has lead to unquestioned support behind education in this country from many quarters, and yet our schools are in trouble, fighting to maintain their hard won appearances. While the nose-dive in American education is an inability to continue making the social engineering palatable, it is being attributed to a loss of authority, and the most common reaction to a loss of authority is more authority, more control.

What then of those parents who choose to stand in the face of these dictates and assume responsibility for educating their own children? As long as all of the proper hoops are observed and leapt through, homeschooling parents can rattle around between laws and regulations and this is called freedom to educate our children. But many parents find these hoops altogether intolerable. In *Homeschooling for Excellence* (Warner Books, 1988) David and Micki Colfax wrote, "Homeschooling parents can ignore what are for the most part government directives as to what shall be taught and when. Rather, parents and children can work together to develop courses of study that address imediate and long-term needs, interests, and capabilities in the context of what they, and not a bureaucracy of decidedly dubious credibility, deem important and necessary."

They can, but in many states such action will bring them into conflict with the law--and with their peers. Too frequently homeschooling "leaders" are briskly admonishing parents who might upset their apple carts by not complying with homeschooling laws and regulations. Civil disobedience in educational matters has become a form of heresy in many support groups, and expulsion for noncompliance is acceptable practice. Parents who find themselves caught between following the law and doing what they consider best for their children are faced with disapproval and outright condemnation from fellow homeschoolers.

Why the intolerance? Fear is a strong motivating factor: fear of a loss of control on the part of the homeschooling support groups and

continued on page 26

Helen Hegener comes from a long line of independent thinkers. She and her husband Mark are raising five more.

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leaders, which could potentially lead to a loss of memberships, or newsletter subscribers, or conference and workshop fees. Fear of a loss of control of others, the old "legislate thy neighbor" attitude. Fear of retribution by authorities in the form of stricter legislation or regulations. Fear of a loss of external control: a recurring theme in many homeschooling newsletters is gratitude for the laws and regulations which guide parents in their homeschooling. Fear that one wouldn't "measure up" if homeschoolers were actually allowed to make their own decisions about education.

A few years ago, after successfully passing homeschool legislation, a major publicity campaign was launched by a large state organization with the slogan, "Homeschooling is Legal and It Works!" A catchy phrase, but I've often wondered if that group could have even considered spreading a slogan before the law was passed, something along the lines of "Homeschooling is Illegal, But It Works Anyway!" Not very likely. To be out of compliance with the law is to be labeled a radical, a reactionary, a rebel.

What seems to escape even the most thoughtful homeschooler is the fact that, at some point in time, someone had to challenge the law and homeschool their kids. No doubt they did so illegally. No doubt they were radical, reactionary, and rebellious. But without that first purposeful step, none of us would be homeschooling our children today--legally or otherwise. We need to look down the road to ten or fifteen years from now and try to imagine what the homeschooling atmosphere will be like then. Will homeschooling families enjoy the freedom to simply live with their children? Or will homeschooling have become a bureaucratic nightmare, with volumes of regulations and guidelines? The choice is ours.

HOMESCHOOL PICNIC & RESOURCE DAY

11 a.m. Sunday 29th November 1992

(if bad weather the following Sunday 6th December 1992)
MEET UNDER THE HOMESCHOOLING BANNER NEAR THE POND

Bicentennial Park Homebush

Everyone welcome !!!!

BRING YOUR LUNCH, YOUR CHILDREN AND YOUR BIKES.

BRING ANY RESOURCES & BOOKS YOU WANT TO SELL & SWAP.

THERE WILL BE TABLES OF HOMESCHOOLING BOOKS FOR SALE

CHILDREN ARE INVITED TO BRING ALONG AN INVENTION MADE OR DRAWN BY THEM TO SHARE IN A NON-COMPETITIVE WAY.

R.S.V.P. To Dodie Conway 02 639 4858

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SPORT & READINESS

by Jo-Anne Beirne

Lately I have noticed a big change in the physical and sports "abilities" of our eldest child Gregory (12). While his interest level and personal commitment to sport has always been high, often his realities could not keep pace with his lofty goals for himself. Gregory has played soccer since he was 6 years old and though he has always been very interested in all sports he was never a "natural" or a "star" at soccer. He played because of his enjoyment of participating in the games themselves. From the very first day Gregory brought special gifts to the team including boundless enthusiasm, good will and an amazing memory for every score in every match. Still to just be in possession of these skills is not enough in most teams where "winning" is the only reason for playing and lack of speed can see one on the bench interminably.

It has been our experience that some teams start at a very young age to grade and weed (small and slow) children so that even in the Under 9's there are already children who play only one or two matches a season and are as it were "on the scrap heap". (So much for socialisation through playing team sport !).

When really young boys play soccer it is mostly a matter of kicking and running with the ball and the fast, big kids with big boots soon become the stars and the regular players. Obviously there are advantages and disadvantages with every game but it is my conviction that it takes some parental persistence and a very aware coach to make sure that there are more advantages than disadvantages.

If the attitude of the coach is "win at all costs" then you can be sure that the parents racing up and down the side line will be shouting "kill" and the kids will also feel an enormous psychological pressure to win. Eventually they will come to hate the kids who make a mistake or don't perform well on the day, including themselves. Personally, I feel it is nerve wracking for both parent and child to be involved in such a gladiatorial contest and defeats the whole purpose of the exercise in the first place. But of course this does not mean that some children do not wish to be involved in really competitve sports so the balance has to be achieved - usually by you!

We have found that kind, calm, congratulatory words, especially after a failure,by the coach do a lot to alleviate children's personal disappointments. After all they are not playing for diamond mines and they already have high expectations for themselves. We have found that "revving them up" or "haranguing" children completely removes the pleasure of the game for the all. I know kids become "used to" this sort of approach but I think it is sad and unnecessary. We have been incredibly lucky with the coach for our team in the last couple of years for without fail he congratulates the individual players for their good personal moves and performances, whether they are the "stars" or not. He also shares awards etc. so that the improvements of some have as much value in the eyes of coach and team as the outstanding skills of others. After a loss he always dwells on the strong points of the game with few or no recriminations. He says you learn as much from a loss as a win and it usually brings you to the next game with a much better attitude and less pressure.

Fortunately the coach of our team has strongly resisted any attempts by anyone to head him in the "win at all costs" direction. He has always given all team members who train regularly and are enthusiastic, equal stints on the field in positions of their own choice and the positions he sees them best suited for in the long term, but it has taken until this year (Under 11's) for us to really see the advantages of this attitude, for a good number of the team members as well as Gregory.

Gregory has mostly played goalie and has become very confident and trusted in this position but he has always wanted to play in the field. He might never have been given a run on the field all these years (as happens to many other kids) because of his lack of speed, by any other coach, but thankfully our coach recognised and encouraged this desire, so he has stuck with soccer for all this time. As it has worked out he has had a good few half games in the field in the last two years and has slowly but surely been building up a range of skills and confidence that his goalie friends in other teams have not been able to do. For instance, we know of a really good striker that the "best" team in the district keeps as a reserve and who rarely gets to play, when this child would be a star in any other team around.

Interestingly enough this year we have seen a major change in Gregory's playing ability in lots of areas Suddenly he seems to be "ready". We have also noticed that other perceived "less talented" kids in Gregory's team have also as it were "become ready", one in particular has developed absolutely remarkable balance and an ability to change direction with the ball which really outwits players much bigger and more experienced than himself. It reminds me yet again of the Integrated Maturity Level spoken of so often by Dr Moore. It is important for me to remember that each of my children is an individual with different timetables for achieving physical, cognitive, emotional and academic skills.

Of course, it also helps the readiness factor if one has the been given the space to do so by an intelligent and thoughtful coach who really does believe that the "playing fairly and well" is much more important than "winning".

MATHEMATICS

I wrote an article on Mathematics for this edition, however while I was away I read a great book by the Nobel Prize physicist and mathematician Richard Feynman called "Surely You're Joking Mr Feynman!" and I realised that he had said what I was trying to say but he says it with much more authority and experience. I hope you will enjoy this piece from his book and in the next edition of the A.H.J perhaps others as well as myself might like to comment on "maths" experiences.

P. 264 - 269 (Judging Books By Their Covers)

I was giving a series of freshman physics lectures at that time, and after one of them, Tom Harvey, who assisted me in putting on the demonstrations, said, "You oughta see what's happening to mathematics in schoolbooks! My daughter comes home with a lot of crazy stuff!"

I didn't pay much attention to what he said. But the next day I got a telephone call from a pretty famous lawyer here in Pasadena, Mr. Norris, who was at that time on the State Board of Education. He asked me if I would serve on the State Curriculum Commission, which had to choose the new schoolbooks for the state of California. You see, the state had a law that all of the schoolbooks used by all of the kids in all of the public schools have to be chosen by the State Board of Education, so they have a committee to look over the books and to give them advice on which books to take.

It happened that a lot of the books were on a new method of teaching arithmetic that they called "new math" and since usually the only people to look at the books were schoolteachers or administrators in education, they thought it would be a good idea to have somebody who USES mathematics, scientifically, who knows what the end product is and what we're trying to teach it for, to help in the evaluation of the schoolbooks..... I agreed to get on this committee.

IMMEDIATELY I began getting letters and telephone calls from book publishers. They said things like, "We're very glad to hear you're on the committee because we really wanted a scientific guy..." and "It's wonderful to have a scientist on the committee, because our books are scientifically oriented..." But they also said things like, "We'd like to explain to you what our book is about . . ." and "We'll be very glad to help you in any way we can to judge our books. . . ' That seemed to me kind of crazy. I'm an objective scientist, and it seemed to me that since the only thing the kids in school are going to get is the books (and the teachers get the teacher's manual, which I would also get), any *extra* explanation from the company was a distortion. So I didn't want to speak to any of the publishers and always replied, "You don't have to explain , I'm sure the books will speak for themselves."

I represented a certain district, which comprised most of the Los Angeles area except for the city of Los Angeles, which was represented by a very nice lady from the L.A. school system named Mrs. Whitehouse, Mr. Norris suggested that I meet her and find out what the committee did and how it worked.

Mrs. Whitehouse started out telling me about the stuff they were going to talk about in the next meeting......... She told me how the members of the commission normally rated the new schoolbooks. They would get a relatively large number of copies of each book and would give them to various teachers and administrators in their district. Then they would get reports back on what these people thought about the books. Since I didn't know a lot of teachers or administrators and since I felt that I could, by reading the books myself, make up my mind as to how they looked to me, I chose to read all the books myself.

A few days later a guy from the book depository called up and said, "we're ready to send you the books, Mr Feynman, 140 kilograms worth." I was overwhelmed. It's all right, Mr. Feynman we'll get someone to help you read them.

I couldn't figure out how you *do* that: you either read them or you don't read them. I had a special bookshelf put in my study downstairs (the books took up seventeen feet) and began reading all the books that were going to be discussed in the next meeting. We were going to start out with the primary school books.

It was a pretty big job, and I worked all the time down in the basement. My wife says that during this period it was like living over a volcano. It would be quiet for a short while but then all of a sudden, "BLLLLLOOOOO WWWW" there would be a big explosion from the "volcano". The reason was that the books were so lousy. They were false. They were hurried. They would try to be rigorous, but they would use examples (like automobiles in the street as "sets") which were *almost* OK, but in which there were some subtleties. The definitions weren't accurate. Everything was a little bit ambiguous they weren't *smart* enough to understand what was meant by "rigor." They were faking. They were. teaching something they didn't understand which was, in fact, *useless*, at that time, for the child.

I understood what they were trying to do. Many people thought we were behind the Russians after Sputnik, and some mathematicians were asked to give advice on how to teach math by using some of the rather interesting modern concepts of mathematics. The purpose was to enhance mathematics for the children who found it dull. I'll give you an example: They would talk about different bases of numbers—five, six, and so on—to show the possibilities. That would be interesting for a kid who could understand base ten—something to entertain his mind. But what they had turned it into, in these books, was that *EVERY* child had to learn another base! And then the usual horror would come: "Translate these numbers, which are written in base seven, to base five." Translating from one base to another is an *utterly useless* thing. If you *can* do it, maybe it's entertaining if you *can't* do it, forget it. There's no *point* to it.

Anyhow, I'm looking at all these books, and none of them has said anything about using arithmetic in science. If there are any examples on the use of arithmetic at all they are about things like buying stamps.

Finally I come to a book that says, ".Mathematics is used in science in many ways. We will give you an example from astronomy, which is the science of stars". I turn the page, and it says, "Red stars have a temperature of four thousand degrees, yellow stars have a temperature of five thousand degrees. . ."—so far, so good. It continues: "Green stars have a temperature of seven thousand degrees, blue stars have a temperature of ten thousand degrees, and violet stars have a temperature of. . . (some big number)." There are no green or violet stars, but the figures for the others are roughly correct. It's vaguely right—but already, trouble! That's the way everything was: Everything was written by somebody who didn't know what the hell he was talking about, so it was a little bit wrong, always! And how we are going to teach well by using books written by people who don't quite understand what they're talking about, I cannot understand. I don't know why, but the books are lousy; UNIVERSALLY LOUSY!

Anway, I'm happy with this book, because it's the first example of applying arithmetic to science. I'm a bit unhappy when I read about the stars' temperatures, but I'm not very unhappy because it's more or less right—it's just an example of error. Then comes the list of problems. It says, "John and his father go out to look at the stars. John sees two blue stars and a red star. His father sees a green star, a violet star, and two yellow stars. What is the total temperature of the stars seen by John and his father?"—and I would explode in horror.

My wife would talk about the volcano downstairs. That's only an example: it was perpetually like that. Perpetual absurdity! There's no purpose whatsoever in adding the temperature of two stars. Nobody ever does that except, maybe, to then take the average temperature of the stars, but NOT to find out the total temperature of all the stars! It was AWFUL! All it was, was a game to get you to add, and they didn't understand what they were talking about. It was like reading sentences with a few typographical errors, and then suddenly a whole sentence is written backwards. The mathematics was just that, hopeless!

Then I came to my first meeting. The other members had given some kind of ratings to some of the books, and they asked me what my ratings were. My rating was often different from theirs and they would ask, "Why did you rate that book like that?" "I would say the trouble with that book was this and this on page so-and-so—I had my notes.

They discovered that I was kind of a goldmine. I would tell them, in detail, what was good and bad in all the books and I had a reason for every rating.

I would ask them why they had rated this book so high and they would say, "Let us hear what you thought about such and such a book." I would never find out why they rated anything the way they did. Instead, they kept asking me what I thought.

We came to a certain book, part of a set of three, supplementary books published by the same company; and they asked me what I thought about it. I said, "The book depository didn't send me that book but the other two were nice." Someone tried repeating the question: "What do you think about that book?" "I said they didn't send me that one, so I don't have any judgment on it."

The man from the book depository was there, and he said, "Excuse me; I can explain that. I didn't send it to you because that book hadn't been completed yet. There's a rule that you have to have every entry in by a certain time, and the publisher was a few days late with it. So it was sent to us with just the covers, and it's blank in between. The company sent a note excusing themselves and hoping they could have their set of three books considered, even though the third one would be late."

It turned out that the blank book had a rating by some of the other members! They couldn't believe it was blank, because they had a rating. In fact, the rating for the missing book was a little bit higher than for the two others. The fact that there was nothing in the book had nothing to do with the rating.

I believe the reason for all this is that the system works this way: When you give books all over the place to people, they're busy; they're careless; they think, "Well, a lot of people are reading this book, so it doesn't make any real difference." And they put in some kind of number—*some* of them, at least; not all of them, but *some* of them. Then when you receive your reports, you don't know why this particular book has fewer reports than the other books—that is, perhaps one book has ten, and this one only has six people reporting—so you average the rating of those who reported, so you get a reasonable number. This process of averaging all the time misses the fact that sometimes there is absolutely nothing between the covers.

A VERY FEW MATHS RESOURCES

UNDERSTANDING YEAR 7 & 8 , 9 & 10, 11, 12 MATHS is a series of 6 maths summary books that set out to explain the rules and give some examples for every topic that should be covered, known and understood at every school level. In the introduction, the author W.S. Marlin points out "It is necessary for students and parents to understand that the complete syllabus up to Year 10 tends to be spiral in nature. What this means is that every year a substantial amount of time will usually be spent revising and consolidating on the previous years work, before any new ideas are presented....... Thus children will spend the first few months of each year revising the most important work from the year before.

VIDEO AIDED LEARNING

This company produces videos of expert mathematics teachers explaining all the major topics from primary to Year 12 Mathematics. They are well produced, easy to understand, give back up service & workbooks and are horrifically expensive, approx $2000 for the whole set and aound $300 for each individual of the ten tapes.

The product has been sold to over 2000 parents I believe and at least a few hundred schools. While schools may be able to afford it I know that this amount would cause a great deal of hardship for many homeschool families (I have also said this to their advertising man). Perhaps we should hassle our libraries to get a set?

The cost is calculated on the cost of a tutor ($35/hr) every week for a couple of years. It also saddens me to think that after 8 hours a week of Maths in school and endless homework that students still need this type of resource and tutors anyway .

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MATHEMATICS RESOURCES

ELEMENTARY ALGEBRA, Harold Jacobs. This textbook is "reader-friendly" and defuses algebra terror. You can browse, looking for things that interest you, instead of feeling you must plow grimly along in a straight line, understanding everything perfectly. Answers to all Set II problems are provided in the back of the book.

"*...My daughter is successfully teaching herself algebra. We ordered* Elementary Algebra *last fall, and she has been working at it ever since... Algebra was a big stumbling block for me in high school so I dreaded getting to the point where my daughter would need help. We tried tutoring but she was frustrated with that so we ordered your book. It is just right for her needs, so she is enjoying (no kidding!), the dreaded ALGEBRA!*" — L. H. (KY)

FIFTY CARD GAMES FOR CHILDREN, Vernon Quinn. A classic collection of games, solitaire, and magic tricks. Learn about numbers while having fun as a family or alone! #282

HOW TO LIE WITH STATISTICS, Darrel Huff. We are surrounded by misleading figures and graphs; this book shows you how to spot them. Entertaining, easy to read - and vitally important. Using this book to study current news would be good not only for the Math part of your home curriculum but also for Citizenship, as we need more healthy skepticism and indignation.

THE I HATE MATHEMATICS! BOOK, Marilyn Burns. Lots of ideas relating math to the real world. Cartoons, jokes, activities. Informal and fun, for children AND adults.

A MATHEMATICAL MYSTERY TOUR, Mark Wahl. The author shares his love of math through a series of unusual ideas, projects, and puzzles. Helps us see that math is not merely arithmetic but a way of looking at the world.

MATHEMATICS: A HUMAN ENDEAVOR, 2nd Ed., Harold Jacobs. Our favorite book about not just the techniques but the spirit and beauty of math, for children or non-expert adults. More than just a superb textbook. Answers for selected exercises are provided in the back of the book.

MATHPLOTS 2, Kate Kerman. How young children will learn math around the home, from playing games, handling money, measuring, examining shapes, etc. Written by a certified teacher from her own homeschooling experiences, this booklet is packed with interesting and practical ideas.

CHALLENGES

Some questions that have been bothering me about Maths, as done in schools, for years-

1. Is the ultimate aim of Maths to gather and regurgitate large numbers of facts & figures or to enjoy & use Maths ?

2. How many people feel useless at Maths & even hate it because of how they were taught Maths in schools?

3. Once a concept in Maths has been really understood does it not make it terminally boring, and turn some children off maths, to continually revise it ?

4. How much of the textbook maths we learnt for all those years do we retain? i.e. how much use is integration, geometric theorems etc. to the general population as compared to the maths of banking, finance etc. ?

5. Is hands-on Maths more or less useful in understanding concepts in Maths? i.e. fractions in cooking.

6. If children really understand the concepts the first time around could they not easily condense 12 years of school maths into 6 years worth. (Actually a lot less, given the efficiency of one to one tuition).

7. Do schools introduce new ways of doing maths (÷, double digit multiplication, etc.) because each way does not suit some children and/or so that they are always the experts and maths is somehow mystified and hard and parents can't help with it?

A CHALLENGE BASED ON OUR FAMILY'S EXPERIENCES WITH MATHS TEXTS

1. Maths texts that ask the same questions year after year e.g. in kindergarten children are expected to answer "What is this shape (a circle) ?" In most texts they are still being asked the same question in grade 6.

2. If you can afford to get a full set of Maths texts (as we did at a garage sale from Yr 1 to Yr 8) go through and put a red mark through every topic that is repeated ad infinitum, long after you hope the child would know it, for example in Signposts Maths Grade 8, the tests still check if they can do single & double digit addition, either they can or they can't by then. If they can't why has the school sent them all the way to a grade 8 Maths class?

3. When correcting your child's work do so carefully because we still find mistakes in the answers, ambiguity in the questions on a regular basis in all high quality Maths books.

4. Remember that our lives are FULL of real Maths experiences, every single day.

Going from School to Homeschooling at 14

We're hearing from more and more teenagers who are just starting to homeschool after being in school for many years. Simone McGuire of Oregon left school in the middle of ninth grade, and when she had been out of school about three months we spoke with her about what it is like to decide to leave school and to make the transition from school to homeschooling:

How did you learn that it was possible to leave school?

My mom's friend was talking about this great book she had read, and it turned out to be *The Teenage Liberation Handbook* by Grace Llewellyn. My mom looked at it a little bit and then decided to buy it. I read it first and I said to her, "Mom, after you read this book, you're not going to want me to go to school ever again." After reading the book I kind of realized that I wasn't going anywhere in school and that I was having a really hard time. I decided that as soon as possible, I would like to get out of there.

How had you felt about school before reading the book?

I liked school until fifth grade, and then it got a lot harder. It felt like you had to work harder for less. I never really liked it during the past few years, but I never thought about leaving. Quitting just wasn't an option. It didn't even enter my mind. I was unhappy - I was always tired, and grumpy, and I wasn't doing well at all. But I didn't know I could leave.

What were the parts of the book that spoke to you, or made sense in terms of your experience?

I liked the stories of kids who were out of school, and where the book explained all the other things you could do besides go to school. And I always knew this, but I hadn't ever thought about it - that school is like a jail. That sentence made me think,"Oh, gosh, yes, that is the way it is." I had always thought that if you quit school you were nothing, a failure, but the book made me see that that wasn't true.

It's interesting - anyone can read a book, but not everyone actually takes a life-changing step after reading a book.

We decided that I would try it out, and that if I didn't like it I could go back to school. So it was kind of like changing my life temporarily, which made me more comfortable taking the step.

When you were just beginning to think about it, did you have any sense of what you would do if you were out of school?

I wanted to take more art classes, and I wanted to go to LCC, the community college here. And I really wanted to just take it easy for a while - getting up at 6 and going to bed at 11 had been really tiring, so I think at first I didn't want to do anything. I just wanted to rest, take a break, and then after a while start doing other things.

My idea sounded ridiculous to them because they thought, how can you learn if you're not in school?

What were some of the things you worried about when you thought about leaving school?

I worried about my dad and stepmom, because they're very school- and career-oriented, and I worried that I wouldn't get anywhere, I wouldn't learn anything, and would just become a failure. My dad was pretty understanding, though. He said, "Well, if that's what you want, it's OK." I think he understood that what I was doing wasn't the same as dropping out.

How soon after reading the book did you leave school?

About a month afterwards, at the end of the first term. I basically left as soon as I could.

How did the kids at school react to your decision?

They had a really hard time with it. I said, "I'm doing homeschooling," and they asked, "Is your mom teaching you?" I said, "No, I'm learning, myself," and they couldn't understand it at all. They just said, "Well, that's stupid." I kept trying to explain that it wasn't stupid, that it was the way I wanted to do it and that it was working out, but I figured out that they're so caught up in school that they don't understand how it could be any different. My idea sounded ridiculous to them because they thought, how can you learn if you're not in school? I kept saying, "Well, you have to read this book!"

Now that you've been out of school for a little while, have you been able to give them a sense of your life and explain yourself any better?

Well, since the middle of junior high I had become - not a loner exactly, but I was doing everything alone and my friendships were starting to grow weaker. So I haven't kept in touch with people from school very much. For a while I was going to the school once or twice a week to eat lunch with my best friend there, but she just moved to California. I saw her out of school too, and we would sometimes talk about what I was doing. She was a senior, so she was excited about getting out of school herself, and I think that helped her to understand. A few people were jealous, I think. One friend of mine said, "My mom would kill me if I even brought that up." Another friend who has a really active social life couldn't imaging leaving that. But you can still get together with people after school and on weekends, and you can meet for lunch the way I did. I don't think you lose all your friends just because you're not in school. And I'm looking forward to meeting new people, too.

Everybody - not just kids at school, but my parents' friends - would ask me, "What do you do all day?" I would answer, "I don't have a plan for every single day. I get up, eat breakfast, go to the library or go to the mall, read a book or write a book report..."

It must have been a new experience to have so much time in which no one was telling you what to do.

I didn't get bored at all. At first I thought, "Oh my God, I've got 24 hours on my hands, every single day," but I didn't feel bored even though I hardly did anything at first.

Last summer I was volunteering at a low-income family center, doing filing, and I called them up and am doing that again once a week. I also called up my mom's friend and arranged to do filing at her office. I guess I'm into office work!

A while ago my mother and I decided that I would get a dollar for every book report I wrote, because we decided that I needed to get going a little bit. I'm having fun with that because I love to read, and I like knowing that I don't have to write the reports by a certain time. One thing I figured out in school is that in high school they kind of drop reading and writing, and I love reading and writing, so I feel I have to get back in the mode of doing it. I felt that in high school I didn't read anything

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that I really learned something from.

I'm also figuring out that I like American history. I like old-fashioned clothes, and learning about gravestones and the people's life stories, and the history of little towns. One day I thought to myself, "I guess that's American history," so I'm thinking of getting some books and researching more about it.

I've never done very well in math, and now I want to take a math class at the community college. It's not that I didn't like math, but nobody ever took the time to get me into it. This year in school I liked the teacher and I started out doing well, but then I lost the momentum - I started out getting A's, and by the time I left I was getting D's.

It sounds as though you feel that you're starting to come out of that vacation period that comes right after leaving school.

Yes, I'm starting to feel that I need stuff to do. I've always liked oil painting and ceramics, and I'm thinking of taking a class and learning to use a potter's wheel.

One big thing that's changed is that I used to be really uptight, and tired, and cranky, and Mom and I would always get into yelling fights about homework. Now it's so much nicer. I'm much easier to get along with, and we hardly fight anymore.

Why do you think your relationship is so much better?

Well, I think I wasn't getting enough sleep before, and that made me cranky all the time. And it's hard to be in the school building all day, knowing that you're also going to have three hours of homework and then get up early and go back to school. It's very stressful. My mom and I have always had a close relationship, but in homeschooling you get to be with your parents more, and you learn more about how they feel, and about how *you* feel. Kids who hate their parents might think, "I wouldn't want to spend all that time with them," but I think they'd get used to it, and after a while they'd realize that there is a person there, with feelings, and maybe they will start to like being around that person. My mother thinks homeschooling is great. She's really glad that I decided to do it. We get to be with each other more, and talk more. I've gotten a lot more projects done around the house, like making curtains for my room and making a list of all the phone numbers we use. I used to feel that I never had time for those kinds of things. We're also planning to have exchange students from Thailand, France, and Spain, and that should be fun.

Now that you're a bit beyond it, can you say anything to parents about what they can do to help kids through that initial adjustment period when they've just begun homeschooling?

Give kids the option of taking a break for a while, and help them through it by asking if they would like you to do certain things. Let them know that you're there and that if they want your help they can ask for it. I don't think parents should make everything a requirement; it's better if they give kids ideas that they can think about. I'd like it if my mother gave me even more ideas, although I understand what she's thinking: she doesn't want to be planning everything for me. She knew she wasn't going to be in the teacher role because she didn't want to be and because she works during the day.

Are you comfortable being by yourself most of the day?

Oh yes, I'm completely used to it. I can get around on my bike or on the bus. At first I thought people would think I was ditching school or was a dropout, and I worried that everyone was staring at me, but no one has asked me any questions.

For more on going from school to homeschooling, see GWS #76, #77, #78, #79, #80.

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Why I Refuse to Test My Children

Ann Lahrson

"But it is such a simple, straightforward, once a year kind of evaluation! Why make it hard for yourself?"

From a parent's point of view, perhaps, yes, but for the children being tested, standardized testing is neither simple nor straightforward. The testing situation is usually anxiety-ridden, bringing unnatural and unnecessary pressures to bear on children whose learning progress can be easily observed without the rigors and pressures of testing.

I hold a philosophical objection to standardized testing as a form of evaluation for every child, in any educational situation. *All children are subject to harm from standardized testing.* The younger the child, the more vulnerable he is to losing his self esteem, perhaps irreparably, in a testing situation.

During the years that I either attended or taught in public school, I observed the harmful effects of standardized testing on my classmates and me, and later on my students. Test anxiety had at least as much bearing on a child's ability to perform as did his knowledge and understanding. Irreversible harm is done to a child's self esteem when, for the sake of the integrity of the test (whatever that means), he is never told the correct answers to the test he has taken. This shocked me as a student, and it bothered the majority of the students in my classrooms. The test was actually deemed more important than the potential for learning that it offered to individual students! Something was very, very wrong.

As a parent of very young children in the early eighties, I considered many aspects of the education question very carefully. I determined that avoiding standardized testing was one of the very best reasons for teaching my children at home. I had other reasons, to be sure, but required testing was high on my list of things that should not happen to young children.

I felt that if, at a later age, they went to public school, and took standardized tests, that was tolerable. Standardized testing is an unavoidable part of the school package. But standardized testing is completely incongruous with the type of learning that happens in the home with homeschoolers, particularly the very young. Older children may occasionally want to know how they measure against their peers, and might choose to be tested. I can see only harm arising from required, routine testing of all children under the age of twelve or so.

If I were required to prove that my children were learning, I thought, I would prefer to gather a portfolio of typical work, keep a journal of daily activities, or some combination thereof. It would be a pain, but certainly a better option than standardized testing. The pain would be mine, not my children's, and I could put up with that.

Imagine my dismay when, just as my oldest child turned seven years old and subject to compulsory education law, my state legislature (Oregon) enacted a law requiring *annual standardized testing of all homeschooled children*, with no exceptions of any kind! Suddenly homeschooled children were subject to more frequent standardized tests than public school children were!

Homeschooled children were required to prove their progress solely via *a testing instrument that was never designed to indicate individual progress*, even in public school! When I taught public school, year after year, I showed test results to parents and cautioned them to consider the test scores as only *one* indicator of their child's progress. And year after year, parents and teachers alike disregarded the cautionary statement, and labeled their children based solely on those scores. Now the state wants to label homeschoolers each year.

No, I did not want my children's learning to be labeled by a series of numbers. I did not want to risk any loss of self esteem. I did not want my children to think that the only important information was the information being tested. I did not want them to spend their years between tests preparing for tests, worrying about tests, or even thinking about tests. An annual test could easily become an annual event to dread as much as Christmas and birthdays are annual events to joyously anticipate. Too risky, I thought.

Before continuing, I want to defend this discussion to someone who might say under his breath, "Well, maybe this parent is afraid that her children might not pass the test. Then her arguments really don't apply to many children who are likely to do well in testing situations."

It is precisely *because* my children are likely to do well on tests that I do not want them to be tested. I'll explain. Both of my children read, wrote, spelled, and did mental math with excellent ability well before the age at which such skill is typically expected. They performed, not to prove anything to me or to a testmaker, but because they loved to learn, and their interests were wide. I wished never to take that away from them.

My elder child, now in public school eighth grade, has been tested in school and currently wears a Talented and Gifted Label. To have "labeled" her earlier could have changed her opinion of herself, her interests, and her ability to learn freely. I am convinced that she would be a different person today,

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had she been tested from a very young age. I think the testing and labeling at an older age may have changed her somewhat, also, but I hope much less profoundly.

My younger child prefers to learn from materials that you and I and everyone else would deem too difficult for her. Yet she finds "age/ability appropriate" work boring and tedious. We have chosen to trust her judgement, and she learns according to her own plan. Recently her clarinet teacher described her as a "gift," a student who learns quickly, accepts correction readily, with good learning habits. Show me a standardized test that will inform me as well as this teacher has!

This younger daughter is nearly eleven, and now shows quite a bit of interest in learning more about the world "out there." Part of that world is standardized tests, and we won't forever prevent her from taking part in such exams, if she wishes to find out her standing with her peers. The distinction is that testing is at her own choice, to learn more about herself, is light years away from state imposed requirements.

And therein lies the crux of my educational philosophy. Learning, and the evaluation of learning, takes place best when it takes place in its own time and at the discretion of the learner. The tools that are used to instruct and evaluate must be selected with far greater care than is currently taken, for the problems caused by side effects of an evaluation tool can be far more destructive than any benefit they can produce.

In fact, some of the more subtle problems of standardized testing cause me far greater concern than test anxiety.

Standardized tests, rather inept measurements of academic progress, are powerful teachers. Few people consider tests to be teaching instruments. If your children take standardized tests, you should be prepared to counter the potentially harmful lessons your children may learn from being tested.

The list that follows includes a few messages that children take away from standardized testing situations.

- "Someone else knows what you should know better than you do."
- "Learning is an absolute that can be measured."

"Your interests are not important."

- "The subject areas being evaluated on the test are the only important things to know."
- "Thinking is not valued; getting the 'right' answer is the only goal."
- "The answer (to any question) is readily available, and it's one of these answers here; there's no need to look deeper or dwell on the question."
- "Your worth can be summarized by a single mark on a paper."
- "The purpose of learning is to get a high score. High test scores are the only purpose of testing."
- "If you score very well, you are better than other people who do not score as well."
- "Poor test scores mean that you are a failure. If you score poorly, there is nothing you can do to change it. Why try?"

The following list of problems with standardized testing is derived from research and observations in school situations. It is likely that some of the same problems will occur with some homeschooled students.

- The single most common misuse of any test score is as a sole evaluation tool, contrary to testmakers' recommendations.
- Tests do not measure what they are said to measure.
- Standardized tests cannot measure creativity.
- Test scores reward children who have one style of learning, and penalize all other children for having a different style of learning.
- Standardized tests cannot measure the ability to think, and actually teach children bad thinking habits, such as trying to outguess the testmakers, rather than think for themselves.
- Standardized tests result in a type of evaluation that is easy to manage (true/false, multiple choice). Thinking skills are very difficult and time consuming to evaluate.
- Standardized tests are designed, not to test individual progress, but to compare a child's progress to the progress of other children. Thus, tests promote competition, not cooperation.
- Poor test scores decrease self esteem, possibly leading to social and discipline problems.
- Testing can damage the trust relationship between teacher and student.
- Test scores and grading are a divisive force in families, separating parents from their natural position as the child's first and most committed teacher. (Yes! Some educators know this! Yeay!)
- Reliance on standardized test scores reduces initiative, independence, creativity, and willingness to take risks in learning situations.
- Test scores become the goal of student work (extrinsic reward) rather than the sense of satisfaction and wonder that naturally follows discovery of something new (intrinsic reward).
- The drive for high test scores creates unnecessary, unproductive stress.
- Standardized tests promote underachievement.
- Testmakers assume that all children have equal readiness for all subjects at the same age.
- Tests focus on a narrow band of learning, emphasizing memorization skills.
- Reliance on test scores and grades causes students to drop courses of study.

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RESEARCH AND HOMESCHOOLING

Many of you will know that I am personally very sceptical regarding the issue of research and homeschooling. For a really good analysis of this issue by researchers and eminent homeschoolers please send for the booklet Homeschooling Research $U.S.4 to H.E.M P.O. Box 1083 Tonasket WA 98855 U.S.A.

This being said I am more happy for academics to study some homeschooling issues if they are not comparing me to any other homeschooler or the education system. I feel that over time this approach may enable a broad range of academics and others to read about the very diverse ways and means that homeschoolers use to give their children high quality education.

From this point of view I have undertaken to publish the following request from Don Haddon, a Masters Candidate from Macquarie University regarding research into the development of curriculum in the homeschool. This is a voluntary survey and no one is pressed to participate. It is completely confidential as no names will be entered on the form and all forms will include postage pre-paid envelopes to Macquarie University. We, at Homeschoolers Australia will be addressing the surveys sent to you as our address list is confidential . In the meantime if you do not wish to receive the survey please drop us a note to that effect and we will return the cost of your postage confidentially but out of the researcher's pocket.

Research into The Nature of Curriculum

For the past twelve months, I have been researching the nature of the curriculum which home schooling parents provide for their children. This research is being carried out through the University of Sydney and has involved the search of available literature and seeking the views of some home schoolers through the conducting of a number of interviews with home schooling parents. At this point, I would like to contact as many home schoolers as possible in NSW and request that they complete an anonymous survey dealing with their views of curriculum, and the processes they follow in developing curriculum.

I have approached Homeschoolers Australia, seeking assistance with the issue of the survey, and have arranged to have completed surveys returned to the University of Sydney, so that anonymity will be assured.

The purpose of this research is not to identify any individual families in the study nor to judge the curriculum which is provided, but to attempt to discover how home schooling parents perceive curriculum, and how they go about preparing for their children's education. It is anticipated that the information gathered will assist home schoolers as they provide a variety of curriculums, and as they seek to discover the most appropriate and effective manner to prepare for the education of their children. The information will be made available to home schoolers at the end of the study.

Your participation in this research would be greatly appreciated.

Don Haddon

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STUDY: HOME SCHOOL CHILDREN GET ALONG BETTER
Monday, 15th June, 1992

GAINESVILLE, Fla. (UPI) -- Children taught at home by parents get along better with others than youngsters of the same age who attend conventional schools, a new University of Florida study says.

Educators and parents traditionally have feared that home-schooled youngsters lag in social development because they lack regular classroom contact with other children, said Larry Shyers, who did the study for his doctoral dissertation in UF's College of Education.

The study's findings suggest that home-schooled children behave better because they tend to imitate their parents, while traditionally schooled children model themselves after other children in the classroom, Shyers said.

"In large classes, where the teacher has limited time for each child, the primary influence is the peer," he said. "Home-schooled children are encouraged to look up to their parents and behave to please them because of the great deal of time parents spend instructing and guiding them.

"The results seem to show that a child's social development depends more on adult contact and less on contact with other children than previously thought," he said.

Many studies show that home-schooled children score as high or higher on standardized achievement tests than children in conventional schools, said Shyers, a psychotherapist, who is chairman of the Florida Board of Clinical Social Work, Marriage and Family Therapy and Mental Health Counseling.

But little if any research has been done on the social adjustment of home-schooled youngsters, he said.

Shyers compared behaviors and social development test scores of two groups of 70 children ages 8 to 10, one educated exclusively at home and the other in public or private schools in Lake, Orange and Seminole counties. Children were videotaped at play and their behavior was observed by trained counselors who did not know which were educated at home or in traditional schools, he said.

Shyers said the study found no significant difference between the two groups of children in self-concept or assertiveness, which were measured by the social development tests. But the videotapes showed that youngsters who were taught at home by their parents had consistently fewer behavioral problems.

He said home-schooled children tended to talk quietly, play well together in groups and take the initiative in inviting other children to join them, he said.

"Traditionally schooled children were considerably more aggressive, loud and competitive than home-schooled children of the same age," Shyers said. "If one child was loud, another child tried to be louder. If one child picked up a toy, another child often tried to take it."

For example, home-schooled 8-year-old girls tended to talk softly to the stuffed animals, while traditionally schooled 8-year-old girls tossed the stuffed animals up in the air and tried to disturb the boys at play, he said.

Home-schooled children quietly introduced themselves at the beginning of a play session, but most traditionally schooled children sat alone watching each other, sometimes crossing their arms and pouting when not included in a game, he said.

All 50 states passed compulsory school attendance laws by 1918, partly on the assumption that the classroom provided the best place for students to develop social skills, Shyers said. He said home schooling has become more common as dissatisfaction with public schools has grown.

More than 6,000 home schools are registered in Florida and anywhere between 10,000 and 1 million are estimated nationwide, he said.

Studies show that between 50 and 70 percent of students educated at home eventually end up in traditional classrooms, Shyers said.

"Many of these children return to the school system because of parents' fears that they may not develop appropriate social skills," he said.

UNSCHOOLING MYSELF

by Lois Stratton Kern

(Reprinted from Home Education Magazine P.O. Box 1083 Tonasket WA 98867)

For a long time now I've been interested in the idea of unschooling. I've read a lot of John Holt's books, and also Growing Without Schooling and talked with many families who are unschooling. It all seemed to make sense, but it wasn't until recently that I've been thinking about unschooling in terms of myself.

In the three years we've been homeschooling, we have not used a prepared curriculum. We have concentrated on the basics: reading, writing and math, plus whatever else happened to come along to grab our interest. And plenty came along - we have had no difficulty being able to claim that we covered art, music, science, literature, and history, just to name a few! My children are happy and relaxed, they have learned how to read and write, and how to get involved in things that interest them.

So what's the problem? The problem is that in spite of the fact that I can see this working, that I can see that my children are being educated, I'm still left with some of my old ideas of what children should know and how they should learn it, according to the "experts."

That's why I cringe whenever someone asks me what phonics program I use. I don't use one, and yet we do a lot of phonics in many ways. The problem comes when I start thinking, "Maybe I should use a phonics program. ~Am I missing something?" Is there some important concept that has been ignored? "Why does everyone else use a phonics program?" When someone mentions that their third grader is struggling with the multiplication tables, I start thinking about my own 8-year old and wonder if I should be teaching her that too. Will she be behind if I don't? Should I drill her with flash cards? When someone talks about their five-year-old who loves to read, and my child is a late reader I start to wonder, "Is something wrong? Should I make her memorize words? Does she have it too easy at home?"

These thoughts come to haunt me again and again whenever I confess our other "faults": a 3rd grader with no math text, a 6th grader with no formal social studies program, no grades for either child, and a child who doesn't know the three states of matter, yet can explain the structure of an atom.

Unfortunately, those families that are very unstructured make me unsure of myself also. I see other children on homestead farms who are learning and experiencing a great deal by raising animals, growing large gardens, and, in general, getting a large part of their education simply by living day to day. Other families live in large cities and have access to good museums, concerts and other special activities that metropolitan areas have to offer. And here we sit in a typical suburban neighbourhood, with only a cat and dog for animals, outside a small city with limited cultural activities. I sometimes feel that I should be doing something a little more "structured" to make up for the lack of these other opportunities. Is their environment rich enough to support the self guided learning I'm trying to foster?

I realize that the answer is yes. My children have years before they have to prove that they are educated (i.e. college boards). Given their natural curiosity, I have no doubt that everything will be covered in one way or another by that time.

The biggest challenge of unschooling is on my part, not theirs. After recognizing that one of the biggest problems I have with unschooling is changing my own way of thinking, I have begun to look back to see what a traditional education did for me. I have come to the sad conclusion that I am not very well educated. Yes, I was a good student all the way through school and in college, but now I know that good marks do not necessarily mean a good education.

The amount that I have retained from my years in school is astonishingly small. I can remember some good teachers, but they were few and far between. What I remember more is the time I wanted to learn about butterflies but had to study sound waves instead because that was the next unit in science. Or the time I got excited about writing "short stories" only to have mine read to the entire class, much to my embarrassment.

After years of being educated in the traditional manner, it's difficult to rid myself of all the baggage I"ve managed to accumulate. All through school I used traditional textbooks, answered the questions at the end of each chapter, took tests and quizzes, did homework and assignments and received grades. I don't use these things with my children because I can see that in our situation they aren't necessary. But that doesn't mean that the public school mentality magically goes away. My common sense tells me one thing, while my background tries to tell me another. And sometimes I find myself listening to the wrong thing.

Recognizing the disadvantages of a traditional education is not entirely new to me. I dropped out of college during my third year partly because I was tired of playing the game and being rushed from one course to another with no time to ponder what I had learned. When I decided to homeschool my daughters, I couldn't bring myself to buy a prepared curriculum because I knew I'd never be able to stick with it when there were so many other things to learn too.

Although we haven't used a formal curriculum, it still has been a struggle to shed my ideas about school. When we first began homeschooling, I thought we would be doing pretty much what the schools do, but in a more relaxed and sane way. It was disturbing to find that my first grader was not going to follow a typical first grade program without quite a fight. If first graders are supposed to learn to read, shouldn't I push a bit to make sure she did? Gradually I realized that the timetables set by the school were not handed down by God, and were not necessarily good for every child. It took a long time to become totally convinced about that.

My bend toward "schoolishness" has also been reinforced by the fact that I have not always homeschooled my children. My oldest daughter was in public school for four years, during which time I went to parent-teacher conferences, helped with homework, etc. It all seemed fine for a while, and when I look back I can see how much my thinking has changed. School has always seemed to have a kind of rhythm to it ever since I can remember.

Homeschooling has been a process of getting to know my children and recognising their interests, learning styles, and learning rhythms. It has also been a process of learning those same things about myself. How much easier it is to accept what they do if I can recognise and accept those same things in myself. They learn best in spurts and when they are truly excited about what they are learning. I do the same.

Unschooling is gradually making more sense to me as I finally come to terms with the learning process within myself. I can understand my children's struggles to learn to read music when I struggle myself on the piano to learn a difficult piece by Chopin. I can sympathize with my daughter reading a difficult book when I'm trying to get my reading level up to where I would like it to be (I may be seventy years old before I get through some of the 19th century novels I want to read!). I wade through the directions of a knitting pattern and understand how difficult it is for them to keep track of knit-purl-knit.

In spite of these moments of insight, I have a long way to go. I feel I've made significant progress simply by realizing where I am, what has influenced me in the past, and where I'm headed. We still have our good days and our bad days. There are days when I'm sure they are not learning anything and never will, but there are many more days when I am amazed at how far they have come. There are also days when I end up saying "Just do this because I say so!", but these happen less and less. My children seem to be able to meet me part way. Homeschooling is, after all, team work.

HOMESCHOOLERS HELPING HOMESCHOOLERS

John Angelico recently had a brilliant idea in his magazine (one of many). He started a list of goods and services provided by homeschoolers that other homeschoolers could use. If you would like to advertise your home business I would like to start a list like this in our magazine too. Our first two are

Stephenie Bailey - Music Teacher and performer
12 Red Cedar Cl. Ourimbah 043 622 689

The Gippels - engraving and sign making
6 Robertson Cres Greenacre 707 3437

Parade Magazine features "Homeschooled" Ph.D.

That conventional school is not essential for learning has been proven repeatedly, but Robert Howard Allen of Tennessee didn't really have homeschooling either as most people think of it. He learned to work at carpentry and house painting like his male ancestors since the '30s, and took care of sick elderly relatives at home, but textbooks covering the usual school subjects did not exist for him. Yet at age 32 when he turned up on a whim at Bethel College to "give education a whirl," because his upholstery business had failed, the administrators were baffled, especially after he had "blown the lid off" his college placement test. He had had no formal schooling, but, because of his potential, college officials arranged a work-study grant combining scholarship funds and a campus job.

According to the reporter of the article in Parade Magazine, it was considered that "the scope of his learning was far greater than that of any professor at Bethel" and they allowed him to skip most of his freshman courses and enter as a sophomore. In three years, he graduated summa cum laude. He then accepted a fellowship at Vanderbilt University and graduated last May with a master's degree and a Ph.D. in English. Since then he has taught a semester of English at Bethel College and also teaches English at Murray State College.

Robert Allen was what would be considered a deprived child in today's society and might even be removed from his home, because his parents were divorced before he was born, his mother left him and later died and he has never seen his father to this day. He lived in a ramshackle farmhouse without indoor plumbing with his grandfather, three great-aunts and a great-uncle who decreed that school was "a waste of time" and blocked authorities from enrolling him. He rarely set foot outside the county where he was born and never rode a bicycle. When he turned up at Bethel College, he had safety pins to hold his ragged sweater together, holes in his shoes and no front teeth.

The county sent a home teacher two times a week for one year, when Robert was six, but that was the end of school. He heard countless family stories and Aunt Bevie Jones, Uncle Eddie's wife who had an 8th grade education, began reading to him, essentially teaching him how to read. Obviously his Aunt Bevie really cared about him and he cared about her, for he brought her with him to Vanderbilt until he was forced to put her in a nursing home where he visited her regularly until she died. His grandfather taught him to write and the boy read the Bible through twice to his blind Aunt Ida.

The secret of his brilliance was reading, which became his first love—not too different from Abraham Lincoln who devoured every book in sight. Yet, fortunately for Robert, books were easier to come by than in Lincoln's day. He began picking up books at yard sales for pennies apiece and accumulated some 2000 volumes by his early 20's.

In addition he discovered the library, a virtual gold mine for a poor youngster and it was the staffer there who encouraged him to try for college. She reported that sometimes his Grandfather Jim and Aunt Bevie came with him. Eventually he worked his way through the entire library! He says he "followed a vague, overall plan, which he more or less fulfilled – "to study literature in the context of history from the earliest times to the present." He also taught himself to read Greek and French so that he could absorb original versions. He considers poetry "language used to its highest potential" and writes it to express some of the sorrow and rejection of his childhood.

If there is anything homeschoolers can learn from this story other than the obvious things, it is that of allowing a child's own motivation to direct his learning rather than lesson plans and required curriculum. Of course, he didn't have fascinating toys, sports, TV and peers to distract him. But it does seem that he had the essentials of the Smithsonian recipe for genius – warm, responsive adults, little or no association with children outside the family and freedom to explore.

This article does not actually do justice to the story of Dr Robert Allan. I was priviledged to hear it from him while in America and it is very interesting to hear about someone who never read until age 12 and then for a long while only the bible and comic books. He received no formal teaching at all, lived in a very poor area with not very well educated people yet he developed a deep and abiding love of literature and a good knowledge of science and mathematics without ever being forced to "study" or do "homework". He decided in the 1983 recession to go to college and did fantastically well there despite fulfilling none of the usual pre-requisites. He is quite unassuming and a delight to listen to.

I am happy to copy the tape of his speech for anyone who wants to send a blank tape, aself-addressed envelope with the correct postage for a cassette tape and a donation of some unused stamps.

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Editorial

Our Ultimate Goal

Those of us who are Christians and believe in an after life recognize that we are educating our children, not only for this life, but for eternity. Yet when we say that, we must recognize that we are not limiting "education" to academics. Indeed, true education is the harmonious development of the physical, mental and spiritual aspects of the individual. Certainly success in life here on earth is important, but in a very real sense we are also preparing for adulthood and for the life to come. Then what is our responsibility in the nurture of our children?

Dorothy Moore

Since we as homeschoolers are convinced of the value of the family, it is important that we bear in mind our goals for the kind of family we want our children to establish some day. The day-by-day training of our children and the example we set for them now are laying the groundwork for the kind of husbands or wives our children will become. Surely you hope that some other family is bringing up children with equally high goals – that their homes, as well as ours, may be a bit of heaven to go to heaven in.

First of all, what kind of family and marriage models are you providing for your children – yours, your friends' families, grandparents or others? Are you training your boys to pick up after themselves or are you going to let their wives suffer that out? Are they learning to be thoughtful of girls and women as a good husband should be? Are you helping your girls become unselfish and loving or are you waiting on them, indulging them so that they become lazy, selfish, vain and rude? Are you hoping that they will become better as they grow older?

Are you training both your boys and girls in home management, money management, nutrition, food preparation, housecleaning, care of an automobile, etc. Are you aware that lack of such information and training can put snags in marriages? When and where will they learn if they don't learn now?

Many of you young parents tell us of the struggles you have, to learn things your parents failed to model or teach you as children. To the extent that we are able, our business is to provide you with the best and fullest information available about all aspects of good parenting through our seminars, this newsletter and our books. As senior citizens, we take Titus 2:2-5 seriously, to teach what we have learned through research and experience.

This is why our books are not limited to homeschooling, but are thoroughly researched in all areas of family life. They cover discipline, character, health, nutrition and home and financial management. If you want high success with low stress and high behavior with low cost, take a look at these books. We haven't had a failure yet. Get them at the library or borrow them from a friend if you cannot afford them. They have helped thousands already. See titles on Order Form.

– Dorothy Moore

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is very proud to sell the following books and video tape by

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EDITORIAL
by Jo-Anne Beirne

Q STORES or Education Dept. Stores

Please, please, please if you are a N.S.W. homeschooler read the Q Stores information in this issue and if you are interested send your request for registration in. It has taken me very much time and effort to get this thing together and as it may well be the strong first step in facilitating access to Sales Tax I would like people to support it if at all possible - just sending for the catalogue will at least register interest with the Educ. Dept.

SALES TAX EXEMPTION

As at 30th August I have prepared and submitted another yet more detailed request for Sales Tax Exemption. Close reading of the relevant sections of the Tax Act reveal a great deal of documentation is needed to support an application and mine went in with well over 100 pages of further information. I believe our case is further supported by access to the H.S.C. as is outlined by John Lambert in his letter in Issue 33 of the A.H.J., I also believe acknowledgement of our educational institution status by the The Educ. Dept. re: Q Stores in Issue 34 will also be a valuable lever in this procedure. I will keep you informed as I believe approval for any one family will mean approval for all with presentation of the correct documentation

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We hope you will decide to renew your subscription to our journal which falls due after the next issue. For $30 you get 6 issues of what we believe is very useful resource, legal and practical information about homeschooling, programming, socialisation, higher education, research and much more. Anyone wishing to subscribe to the 6 issues of the journal in 1993 is requested to send a cheque for $30 to Homeschoolers Australia P.O. BOX 420 Kellyville 2153.

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JOHN HOLT'S BOOK & MUSIC STORE

Homeschoolers Australia pty ltd is carrying most of the books that the **JOHN HOLT'S BOOK & MUSIC STORE** sell in the U.S. including Homeschooling for Excellence by the Colfaxes, whose sons ended up at Harvard and their new book Hard Times in Paradise; Better Than School and Child's Work by Nancy Wallace; Learning all the Time and Teach Your Own by John Holt, the books about learning to read and literacy issues by Frank Smith Joining the Literacy Club and Insult to Intelligence. Also In Their Own Way by Thomas Armstrong which explores the fact of different types of intelligence rather than just linguistic or mathematical intelligence.

DR. RAYMOND & DOROTHY MOORE

Homeschoolers Australia pty ltd is also carrying most of the books and the video that are written by **DR RAYMOND AND DOROTHY MOORE** the esteemed Christian educators and authors of Home Grown Kids, Home Spun Schools and Homeschool Burnout etc.

BOOK CATALOGUE

We will be posting out our catalogue to all our subscribers within a couple of weeks. If you have a friend who you think would like the catalogue that supplies more detailed information about any of these books PLEASE RING AND LEAVE THEIR NAME AND ADDRESS ON OUR MACHINE 02 629 3727 and WE WILL BE HAPPY TO SEND YOU ONE.

MONTHLY HOMESCHOOL GATHERING & SPORTS DAY

Aim: To network, provide a venue, support, encouragement and infomation for those homeschooling or those thinking about it.
VENUE: Kellyville Sports and Recreation Center, Memorial Drive Kellyville **10 a.m.- 2 p.m**

- **Tuesday 20th October 1990,**
- **Monday 23rd November 1992**

Facilitated by Greg & Jo-Anne Beirne. There are already a large number of older children at this meeting and it is a super large area so we do lots of large group activities such as soccer games (age based), volley ball, running, skipping, hopping races and ball games. There are swings and all aged children are very welcome. If you have anything to share in the line of games please feel at liberty to bring them. This meeting will always be on except if it is raining. Contact persons for more information - Dodie Conway 639 4858 Ann Gippel 707 3437

HOMESCHOOL PICNIC
29TH NOVEMBER 1992

* Everybody warmly welcomed

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Contact persons : Dodie Conway 639 4858
Ann Gippel 7073437

TIME: 11 a.m. - 6 p.m. or anytime in between.

Venue: The venue of this event has been changed to Kellyville Sport, Recreation Center & Park Memorial Drive Kellyville.

What is planned:
* A large sports and picnic day, with a BBQ available.* A huge range of new Homeschooling books available to see.* A collection of new, as new and old school type, fiction and non-fiction homeschooling and educational resources.
* Shared afternoon tea, in an indoor, upstairs room. (Tea and coffee making facilities and a large fridge available).

Who and what to bring:
* Any new or used books you wish to sell, swap or trade. * The whole family- grandparents are most welcome,* Sports equipment, balls, comfortable clothes, sandshoes, etc.* Your lunch and something to sit on.* A small plate to share at afternoon tea 4 p.m.- 6 p.m.

LOCAL NEWSLETTERS

If you can possibly afford local newsletters I believe they are an essential support mechanism for all homeschoolers. You will be able to find out about local get togethers, excursions, resources and many other useful pieces of information. Hopefully your local newsletter will be able to connect you with people who have the same philosophies and interests as you so to provide ongoing friendship and support.

WEST AUSTRALIAN SEMINARS

At the invitation of Sue Warner 09 294 4553 from The Home Based Learning Network, Gina Wright from The Rainbow Coast Homeschooling group and Karen Lawtie of the Bunbury Homeschoolers 097 311 817, I am going to Perth in November to do some networking and information gathering and talking with homeschoolers and politicans. If you wish to know more please ring any of the above contact numbers.

W. A. Court Case

The case that is presently in dispute has been accepted for hearing in the Supreme Court early in the New Year.

QUEENSLAND

One of the results of the Queensland election where the Labor party was easily re-elected was that there is now a new Education Minister in that State - Mr Condon- he was previously the Minister for The Environment.

A recent letter I received from The Director General of Education in Qld. Prof Roger Scott answers many of the questions I have had about the process of change. It states:

1. TheHome School State Review Committee is not entitled to ask for change to the regulations, i.e. it is involved in the process of dispensation. However, if the Committee chooses to recommend change the Minister, he is at liberty to listen to or ignore their recommendations.
2. There is no need for the legislation to be amended to allow the removal of the present requirements for a homeschool parent to be a registered teacher, use A.C.E. programs or Dist. Educ programs. The guidelines are governed by an Order in Council and can be changed without amending the legislation.
3. Prof Scott's letter speaks about change and the need for the involvement of the whole community in any negotiations but he also says this process should not be undertaken hastily.

GETTING STARTED WITH HOMESCHOOLING

The information booklet for those thinking about homeschooling has recently been UPDATED & reprinted.

If you have a friend or relative who wants to know the answers to these pertinent homeschooling questions
•WHY •HOW •HIGH SCHOOL •TERTIARY •ACCOUNTABILITY •LEGAL ISSUES
* SOCIALIZATION & the answers to 30 or 40 other commonly asked questions & concerns
Please tell them to send $15 for our information package to

Homeschoolers Australia pty ltd.
P.O. Box 420
Kellyville 2153 Ph: 02 629 3727

Resource Information

compiled by Jo-Anne Beirne & Anna Adams

Computer Information and Resources

Applecations Newsletter
Apple Users' Group P.O. Box 1077 Dee Why 2099 $45/year, newsletter- 10 issues. Reviews Apple software. Has a list of volunteers who are available to answer questions in many areas.

Kurrawood Computers
facilitating purchase of Apple Computers at the Education price for all homeschoolers. Shop 5, 148 Windsor Rd Richmond 2753 045-78-2377. Apple software available.

New Horizons
Is an organisation that services schools and individuals with a special interest in educational service & materials. They publish a large and superb catalogue full of information about an enormous range of programs and could easily be called educational computer software experts. They stock IBM Compatible, Apple and Macintosh software. For a catalogue ring New Horizons PO Box 658 Armidale NSW 2350 Ph 008-023-069 Fax 067-71-1050.

Try & Byte Pty Ltd
Macintosh Entertainment Centre, Macintosh Software User Centre, for Catalogue Shop 3 Oxley St Crows Nest 2065 Ph 02-906-5227 Fax 02-906-5605

Connections
Quarterly newsletter from Curriculum Corporation PO Box 177 Carlton South 3053. This is a really interesting newsletter because it provides information on networks that libraries and schools can access for a reasonable cost to download information into their computers and access a wide range of databases e.g. SCIS, AAP, Presscom, Eric, Dialog, Pergamon, Ausinet, Sportscan etc.

Dominie School Centre
This bookstore has most books for every subject done in schools. Ring for catalogue of a wide range of education products. 8 Cross St Brookvale 2100 Ph: 02- 905-0201 Fax 02-905-5209

Education Alternatives
Independent Monthly National Newsletter for educators. PO Box 365 Caulfield East Vic 3145 Ph 03-576-0061 Sub: $65/10 iss/yr.

English language teaching resources
P.E.N. The Newsletter of Primary English Teaching Assoc. Laura St Newtown 2042 Ph: 02-565-1277. Newsletter & product catalogue concerned with English language and literacy skills. Membership $45/year

German, French & Japanese
Modern Languages Resources:Resources for German, French & Japanese Catalogue from Ashton Scholastic P.O. Box 579, Gosford 2250 043-28-3555 Showroom:345 Pacific Hwy Lindfield 2070

Gifted & Talented Students Resources

Symposium:
"Accelerated Progression of Academically Gifted Students" with Professor Julian Stanley & Dr. Jan Hansen Tuesday October 6th 1992 9.30 - 4.30 p.m. University of New South Wales tickets: $90 Enquiries: 02-697-5540

Assessment *& Advisory Services*
Advancement Centrefor Gifted & Talented Children & Adults 9 Brett Avenue Wentworthville 2145 02-896-231. Seminars for Parents of gifted Children. Next being held 6th November 1992 Also Courses for Gifted Children next Oct. 17th, 24th,31st. Assessment $150 per child per hour in Writing & Speaking & Science.

Homeschoolers Camp

Cataract Scout Camp off Appin Rd Wollongong from 4p.m. Feb. 26 - 4p.m. Feb. 28th 1993 Lots of exciting activities for the days including Caving, Abseilling, Archery etc. for small cost. Ring Sue Dowey 046-311-180 or write to"Denwood Park" Kennedy Grove Appin 2560

Money making opportunities

Aussie Monogram Company
P.O.Box 183 Kincumber 2251 enables people to sell first aid kits, monogrammed stationery, mugs etc. as a fund-raiser ; 20 -25% commission orders for pre Xmas delivery Oct. 31st. Ph 008-800-818 for more information.

Great Australian Book Fairs
is a company that sells recreational reading material for children at reduced prices and gives free books if you conduct a fair yourself. P.O. Box 525 Gosford 2250 Ph 043-28-5433, Toll-free- 008-024-840, Fax 043-28-2205

Museums

Please do not forget museums and other state government run educational institutions as wonderful resources in the school holidays. For example the Old Mint in Sydney and The Powerhouse museum conduct really economical but extremely high quality workshops in a wide range of art and crafty type pursuits every school holidays and usually special exhibitions as well such as Gargantuans of the Garden which is presently showing at the Australian Museum in College St.

N.S.W. Board of Studies

H.S.C. information materials
If you are in Nth Sydney drop in and see the material that the Board of Studies has for sale concerning the H.S.C. including information about HSC Course Outlines; Sample Answers to Exam questions, Subject Manuals, 35-51 Mitchell St., North Sydney 2060 or Ph 02-925-8178.

Neil Mierendorff
is the Board of Studies Liason Officer for the North West region. He has written to all homeschoolers in his region enabling them to facilitate contact with each other if they so desire. I really encourage homeschoolers to make contact for support, encouragement and information sharing and congratulate Neil on his thoughtful initiative. Please take the opportunity to write if you are in that region and wish to be included on this homeschoolers list to Locked Bag 1610 P.O. Tamworth 2340 or 067- 684-716.

Science Materials
For a really thorough and detailed set of activities and information it is very hard to beat the Board of Studies K-6 Science & Technology syllabus and support documents. A main document available for $20 supported by a series of 12 high quality booklets (teaching kits) $4 each. Highly recommended as being excellent value. Full of interesting projects from K -6. For Catalogue and order form: Sales Clerk, Communications Branch, Board of Studies 35-51 Mitchell St North Sydney 2060 or Ph 02-925-8178.

Qld Educ. Dept.

MCCC Update
This bulletin printed by the Queensland Education Department and compiled by the Ministerial Consultative Council on Curriculum Issue 3 1991 printed information regarding the alternative learning styles and the book Frameworks of Mind by Howard Gardner.

Video Resources
Video Media Pty Ltd P.O. Box 186 Alstonville 2477 066-28-3838 Fax: 02-28-0884 Supply videos on a wide range of Australian topics with accompanying books $52 per title.

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P.O. BOX 420
KELLYVILLE 2153

How our program has changed over the years

by Carolyn Arthur

The first time I heard about natural learning I can remember thinking, if only I could have been educated in this way my love for learning would never have been stifled so many years ago.

I wanted to foster this natural curiosity and love of learning that children have at a young age, with our children ages 8, 6 & 2, but I found that "school" type thinking was a very hard concept to forget. In the beginning I clung to this type of learning as security by following a highly structured program. I felt as if I was groping in the dark and to have a curriculum laid out step by step was a tremendous help to me. As time went on, I began to feel a little frustrated because there were so many activities the boys could have been doing, but by the time their book work was finished, I was frazzled and so were they.

Bit by bit I have experimented with different approaches to their education, watching their responses, and bit by bit the structure of our program has disappeared. I didn't want the children to see their education as a separate part of their life where each subject seemed unrelated to the other. I wanted them to see that each piece of information they learnt was another piece in the puzzle, helping them to understand the world we live in.

I felt considerably relieved when I decided to put the workbooks away but also a little uneasy wondering if the boys would ever learn all they needed to know. It seems silly when I look back on it now, knowing the vast quantity of information they have devoured and stored since we started learning in this way, but I still get waves of doubt especially during periods of lighter learning that happens from time to time. I keep reminding myself that children learn as the information is relevant to them and that the timing can be different with each child.

I decided the best way to start our new, unstructured way of learning was to expose the boys to a smorgasbord of information and activities, then sit back and see what would happen. I visited the library and came home with a large bundle of books on varying subjects that I knew the children would possibly be interested in. Their interest was overwhelming. I was swamped with questions like "What is this picture about Mum?" "Who is this man?" and "Can you read me this one first?" Consequently our trips to the library have become a regular event. I already had quite a variety of activity books in our library at home, not just art and craft type projects but activities for teaching science. Our favourites are the World Book Young Scientist set and also Usborne books. These books contain lots of hands on activities using household items. The books contain lots of hands on activities using household items. The books from the library tend to be along the lines of social studies/history, stories, tapes and children's poetry. These books have taken us to many different parts of the world and the children's knowledge of the globe is amazing. We have read about many lives from history which have led to a better understanding of what history is and how it develops through the years.

Our day usually begins with reading and ends with another chapter or so of our latest book. The boys will often work along with me when I am cooking and a lot of science and maths has been learnt in this way. Regan(6) enjoys the garden and we grew spinach and carrots over the cooler months. He has learnt about the germination of seeds, the needs of plants, roots, natural methods of pest control, composting and snails. After discovering lots of worms in the soil we decided to make our own worm conservatory with two clean containers. The worms had grown quite large by the time we emptied them back into the garden eight weeks later, and the boys had learnt a considerable amount about the environmental needs of a worm, its food, reproduction and usefulness to the gardener.

Recently the boys began writing letters to friends and relatives and designing birthday cards with their own special messages for family members. They create outside games for which they keep score, then add the numbers to see who has won. Maths manipulatives like multi-link cubes have taught numerous maths concepts from addition, subtraction and division to measurement. Dams built in the garden and lined with plastic have set the scene for a lesson on 'floating and sinking". Empty milk containers, jugs ad measuring cups teach measuring in the bath.

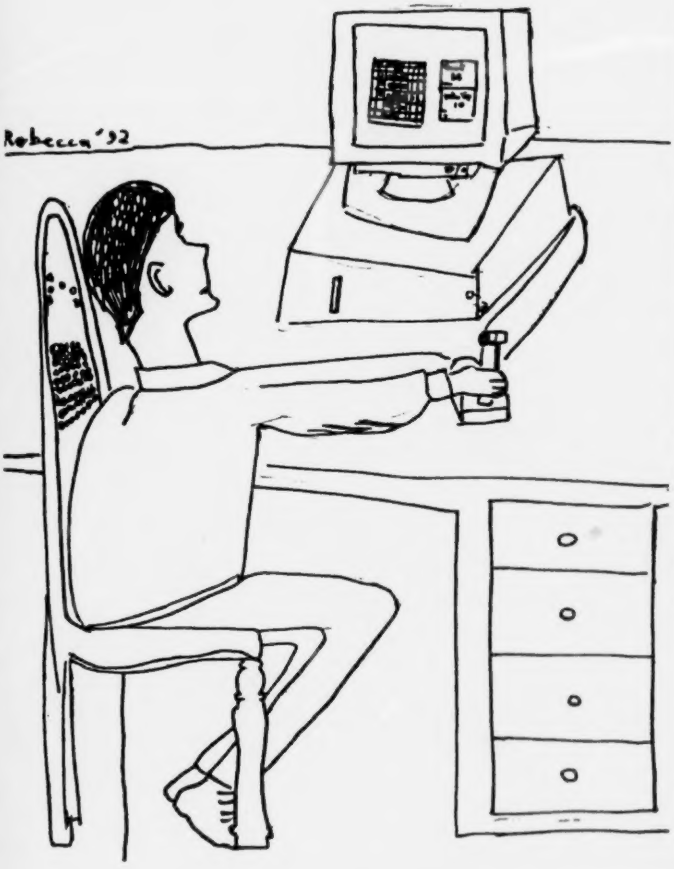
We try to plan frequent outings as a family so Dad can join in. The newspaper has been a great source for many of our excursions and activities. During Aboriginal week we attended a corroboree, visited the "Green Train" in Newcastle station, saw over an American Navy Frigate and observed the history of steam and the Steam Festival in Maitland. Landon, 8, is attending a three month basic art course for children for $1 per class run locally. The boys also enjoy exploring in the bush or rock pools at the beach. The local community is alive with activities that can enrich a homeschool program.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

How our homeschooling has changed over the years by Carolyn Arthur

continued from page 7

My husband and I love to watch the childrens' reactions to this style of learning especially when they turn around and say "we haven't done much schoolwork lately". They don't seem to realise that they are learning, to them its just life. We find it wonderful to watch them, often all by themselves, learning the basic principles of nature, purely by observation and experience as a part of their play. The more we watch them the more conscious we become of how extremely efficient this way of learning is. The stress has gone and homeschooling has become an integrated part of our lives.



No Contest

by Alfie Kohn

A Book Review

by Steve Ward

This book directly challenges the wide range of preconceived ideas commonly held about winning and losing, questioning the necessity, and inevitability of the presence of competition within our families and institutions. Kohn exposes, and refutes, the popular cultural myths concerning the positive value of competition, where in order to win someone else has to lose. This ubiquitous situation, which is often either revered, taken for granted, or naively defended in the name of common sense, is proved to be detrimental to creativity and self esteem, possessing no intrinsic moral or intellectual value. Competition is not a part of our 'human nature', but is in fact culturally specific, having its strongest source in our school system.

With an aggressive literary style which makes the book interesting to read, and the complex issues dealt with more accessible, Kohn asserts that the process of learning, and personal growth, is more successfully undertaken within a cooperative, mutually supportive environment. The research which Kohn has collated verifies that the 'spirit of competition' in fact inhibits the learning process, and is responsible for many of the social ills that seem endemic to our culture. Competition is not inevitable, despite the criteria within our society which makes it seem so. There are alternatives, and the fact that empirical evidence supports these alternatives demands a response.

This is at times, a confronting and disturbing book, challenging a status-quo which seems ruthless in its selection process, and compelling its readers to re-evaluate their own motives and methodology. I recommend it as compulsory reading for all home schoolers.

It may well be that genuine education, which is decidedly not the consequence of our schooling, may not even be its chief purpose. The point of competition , suggests education critic George Leonard, is "not really to help students learn other subjects, but to teach competition itself". (p.59 No Contest)

I was one of the children taken by the N.S.W. Dept. of Community Services

It is illegal to print the name of the person writing this article while the case is still being heard. Suffice to say I am totally convinced that these are the words of a young adult who wrote it from the heart and who was under no pressure from anyone to do so.

Something very, very strange has happened recently. I'll bet it's the biggest goof in the history of Australia! One day, COMMUNITY SERVICES stormed into the house of a good religious group,and stole away their children whilst they were asleep!

I know, I was one of the kids!

I was very, very shocked when I first realised it was the Police raiding our home, and not ordinary kidnappers. More still, when I first heard that some people are saying that our Parents do not take good care of us!

I want to make it very clear that any one who would say something like that has either never met us, or is down right lying! You may think that because I am a child, I don't know what I'm talking about, or that Iam told to say this, or you might have some other idea.

So, Ithought it might help if I explained life in our homes a little more throughly than what these liars think they know.

First of all, in our homes nobody may drink, smoke, use drugs, (illegal ones, of course) or carry out violence. these are all excommunicable offences. And as for our parents not taking good care of us, I just want to make it known that we must have the best Parents in the world.

What in our life style does anyone think is inferior to most people's? Sure, it's different, but it's not illegal to live together, or to be Chriistian Missionaries, or to live like the early disciples did,is it? Us kids get enough to eat, enough exercise, as well as enough schooling and sleep. I don't see anything wrong with the way we live, & Ican't see anything wrong with the way my Dad and Mum take care of me!- at least it's better than the way they were at Ormond!

Some of the things they did there were quite crooked!

For instance, when they woke us up, we were told that we were going for a day & and a night,to have break off school.

Another example is when we first arrived, they gave us appilication forms to get out of there, but then they wouldn't let us apply! In fact, we were not allowed acess to telephones, or to write letters until the very end.

One of the D.O.s would come & say "Did you kids hear my crude joke for the day? He told reporters that we tell crude jokes!

The fact is that these children were removed from their homes and that charges against their parents have still not been laid, despite many months of intense surveillance. Furthermore the Dept. of Community Services feels it has the right to determine the quantity, quality and content of the education & socialisation given to these children by their parents. The chief D.O.C.S officer in this case has even called the Board of Studies a "defective organisation". THIS IS a VITAL issue for all homeschoolers.

L.E.T.S. W.W.O.O.F. !!!!!

An invitation to visit an organic farm by Judith Chorley

There are two resources Homeschoolers may wish to be aware of (if they are not already aware of them!) which could deeply enrich their practical experience and knowledge.

WILLING WORKERS ON ORGANIC FARMS

The first of these is the organisation called "Willing Workers On Organic Farms" which is rapidly becoming known internationally having begun in the United Kingdom and spreading to some European countries, United States , Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The list grows constantly.

W.W.O.O.F. is a wonderful way in which to gain first hand experience of farming and organic gardening, requiring only $15.00 annually to join. For this year receive a list of host farms in the country of interest, which gives a description of every farm; its locality; what they do; phone numbers etc.

Its then up to you to choose the farm and then either phone or write to them to arrange for your visit for a mutually agreed period. You will be given meals and accommodation in exchange for four hours of work each day. There is no further cost except for private phone calls etc. Some host farms find it difficult to have children and farms who accept families are marked accordingly in the farm list.

There is a studentship available to any student with a love of agriculture, through this system. There is a network of commercially certified Organic farms which cater for serious students of alternative agriculture for periods of up to twelve months.

Membership of Organic Farming Studentship is separate from W.W.O.O.F. and costs $Aust 20.00. Enquiries about studentship and W.W.O.O.F. generally, are welcome through W.W.O.O.F. Lionel Pollard, W Tree, Buchan Victoria 3885 Australia.

We have been a member of W.W.O.O.F. as a host farm for the last seven years and our seven year old has enjoyed interaction with people from all over the world especially Germany, U.K., Japan, U.S., New Zealand and Canada.

You can imagine how often the world map or globe is referred to, to find out where our visitors are from. It is a wonderful way to learn from other people and to appreciate other cultures viewpoints, objectives, interests politics and to ultimately simply value the people of the Earth as one big family.

We would like to invite homeschoolers here on a similar basis without the obligation to work or join W.W.O.O.F. - simply as homeschoolers learning from homeschoolers or friends of friends.

LOCAL EXCHANGE TRADING SYSTEM

The other organization in which we are involved is far more local but may provide just as much opportunity or not more, provided there is a system operating in your area - or you may wish to start one. There are as many as twenty systems operating in Australia and many more overseas. Its called Local Exchange Trading System or simply L.E.T.S. and empowers us to utilise more fully the gifts and talents of the local community without the limiting factor of federal dollars. You might have longed for those art classes but put them aside because of the money that seemed so elusive and needed for essentials, but now, provided there is an art teacher on your list, you can happily go ahead.

So what is L.E.T.S.? Its a simplified banking system. LETS units (such as our local "waratahs" which were given the value of $2.00 each) take the place of dollars. Goods and services are exchanged for an agreed price in LETS units which are then credited and debited to the appropriate members accounts on a central computer.

This system can boost self-esteem enormously where there is massive unemployment and presupposes that all members of a community have worthwhile goods and services to offer.

We have acquired computer lessons for Loren and ourselves through this, that we certainly would not have done otherwise, as well as many other things.

I can see opportunities for children of any age to be directly involved in this and to gain from it enormously, even if a child only minded a pot plant or a pet in order to gain LETS units. They might then spend the units on having their bikes fixed or maybe lessons in abseilling or music for example. The possibilities are only limited in our imaginations as well as giving a valid experience of alternative monetary systems.

We are deeply impressed by this system and recommend it highly as a very effective means for Homeschool families to access our community resources more fully. We are happy to be a contact point for anyone requiring further information (phone 045- 672124) otherwise Eric Brocken (045-721-002) is our local counsellor for the Hawkesbury LETS system. Another local system exists in the Blue Mountains which has recently amalgamated with the Hawkesbury system.

A Wonderful Career Choice

by Marj Taberner

In life we all make many choices, some very important, some less so. Most responsible and loving parents make choices for their children which are both considered and, at least when made, believed to be in the best interests of the child.

We have made the choice to homeschool our children. This choice removes us in some ways from the mainstream; it is an uncommon choice.

Many other parents feel threatened by the choice that we homeschoolers have made. Frequently they feel that our choice is an implied criticism of theirs. Some make judgements about our competence, our motives and our abilities. At times these judgements can tend to make some of us at least, doubt ourselves and our abilities.

It is at these times that we can start to feel inferior to those who have made different life choices and are managing rewarding, and successful careers outside the home, or, are holding down jobs which substantially boost the family income. We can even get to the stage of feeling guilty or inadequate because we are not likewise occupied.

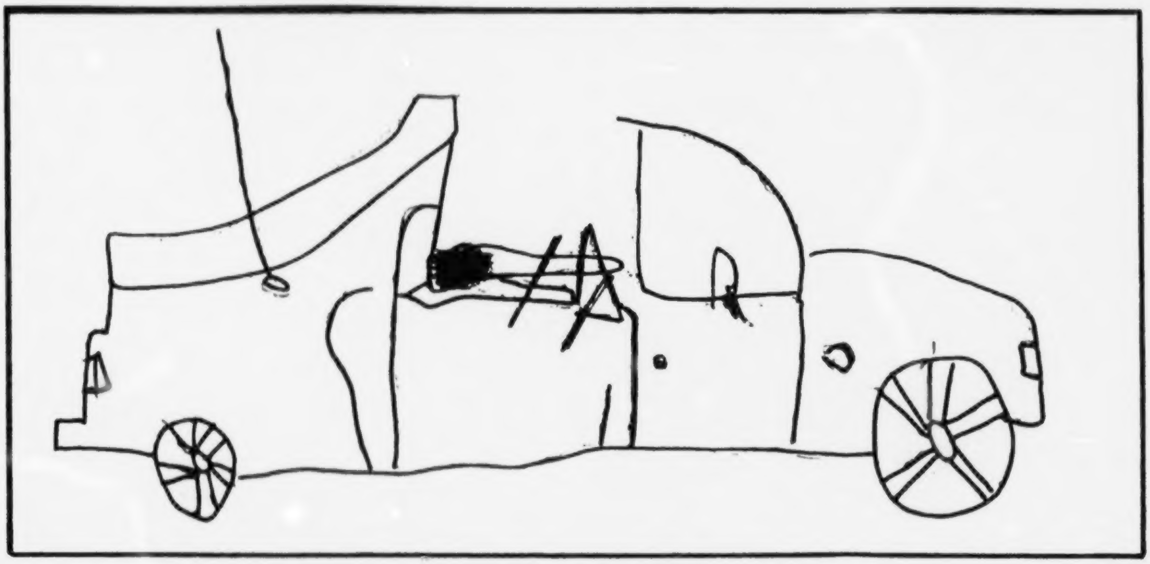
Motherhood came to me at a later age than is usual. That has some disadvantages but also many advantages. One of the major advantages for me has been experience. I have experienced a successful career. I have observed my friends bringing up their families and have seen many changes in society and its values. No-one will ever be able to make me feel guilty about not still being in the workforce - it can be a pretty empty, self serving world out there.

We homeschoolers have a wonderful career, which to us is more important than most careers which are being pursued anywhere. We are helping to mould the next generation. We are encouraging our children to adopt values which we believe are correct. We are educating our own children because we believe it is too important a responsibility to be left to someone else - a stranger.

This life choice we have made would not be suitable for, or acceptable to, many families. Financially, it is a costly choice. Often it can be an exasperating choice. So, if ever any of us is tempted towards feelings of guilt about our homeschooling and family careers, perhaps we should ponder a while:

- Did we believe that this choice was the best choice for our family at the time that was made?
- Do we sometimes delight in the achievements and maturity of our children?
- Do we thrill sometimes as a spark of knowledge illuminates one of our children's faces ?
- Do we gain satisfaction by being able to build on the knowledge that we know our children have ?
- Is it satisfying for us to know that we are reponsible for their well-being both physically and emotionally ?
- Do we gain the feeling of achievement sometimes when we have helped a child achieve success with a skill that has proved difficult to master ?

While ever we can answer yes to most of these questions, we are gaining more satisfaction out of our careers than most people in the paid workforce. How fortunate we are to have been able to avail ourselves of this opportunity. Feel proud !



Homeschooling after schooling

by Cecilia & Donna Giandomenico

How encouraging it is to discover so many others experiencing the same joys, difficulties and discoveries as we are. I particularly enjoyed the article by Susan Crossley on her progression over four years of homeschooling. Having just completed the first of our two year registration we have ourselves progressed from an almost carbon-copy school type program to a less structured one. Our daughter Donna is very interested in Science and our kitchen table is often honoured with many interesting (and messy) experiments. For children and adults who are interested in a broad range of scientific interests I can recommend the CSIRO's Double Helix Club. The magazine has lots of interesting information and hands on experiments and at $15 a year is great value.

During our first year we have enjoyed a leather work day with 4 families at our place, a trip to Wellington caves, Burning Mountain, the Power Station and Pavarotti. At the moment we are building a Permaculture- No Dig garden and worm farm as part of our outdoor project in biology and the environment. Enclosed is a letter from Donna- totally her own work !

THE BIG DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SCHOOL AND HOME-SCHOOLING

BY DONNA GIANDOMENICO 12yrs.

I have been doing Homeschooling for a year now and have found it to be a lot better than school. Lunch and recess I had nothing to do but walk around as very few children would play with me.

It was no better in class. For instance once when I came across a question I was not able to answer, so I put up for help, after ten minutes I still had no reply, so I went over to ask the teacher. All she said was ,"Go sit down and put your hand up," so I did again until about five minutes before the lesson ended I gave up and had to work it out for myself.

Once I had a teacher who spelt Piano, Piana and wrote on my report that my handwriting was carless and spelt a lot of other things wrong during the year.

We never did any Science experiments. I myself love Science but hate repetition in other subjects. Though I know of other schools that are a lot better than mine was I still think a lot of children go right through school and come out not even able to read, whereas Homeschoolers come out well educated. So I say Homeschooling can't be anything but the BEST.

APPLE COMPUTERS EXTEND THEIR EDUCATION PRICE TO ALL HOMESCHOOLERS

Thank you Apple & Kurrawood Computers!!

In conjunction with Ross & Heather Bullôt and all the great people at Kurrawood Computers, Homeschoolers Australia is delighted to announce that all N.S.W. homeschoolers and very soon all Australian Homeschoolers will be welcome to pay the educators price for Apple hardware from 30th September 1992.

What is the procedure?

1. If you wish to purchase any Apple product, Kurrawood Computers will order, then deliver and install your computer hardware or arrange to have this done for you. Inter-state subscribers will be notified as soon as this service is available nation-wide.

2. In order to be eligible for the discount prices, families need to be on the Homeschoolers Australia/Apple Register. To have your family registered, you will need to send a copy of your current Homescooling Registration and $35 (The registration price for Australian Homeschool Journal subscribers is $25) to Homeschoolers Australia, P.O Box 420 Kellyville 2153.

3. It is essential you be a legitimate homeschooler to participate in this service. It is up to the homeschooler to provide concrete evidence that you are a homeschooler and Homeschoolers Australia reserves the right to protect itself from prosecution by refusing any homeschooler whose evidence of homeschooling is inadequate. A reminder will be sent annually to those people who are registered to ensure your continuing registration with us in case you intend to up-date your hardware.

4. You only need register if you wish to buy anything. We will register your order process it and send it to Kurrawood Computers who will attend to it immediately. Their phone number is 045 782 377.Their fax no. is 045 782 173.

5. If you wish to know more please send a self addressed stamped envelope to Homeschoolers Australia pty ltd A.C.N. 003 222 848, P.O Box 420 Kellyville 2153. Our phone number is 02 629 3727. Our fax number is 02 629 3278.

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LC II 2Mb HD40, 12" colour	3890	3494	396
LC II 4Mb HD40, 12" colour	4090	3737	353
LC II 4Mb HD80, 12" colour	4390	4010	380
ImageWriter II Printer	795	727	68
StyleWriter Printer	895	818	77
LaserWriter NTR Inc Toner	4180	3560	620
LaserWriter IIf Inc Toner	6740	5561	1179

These prices include delivery in the Sydney metropolitan area only at the moment. Ring 02 629 3727 for more details about out of Sydney delivery.

Please note: the prices of Apple equipment is due to change from the 19th October 1992. An updated price list will be printed in Issue 36 of the A.H.J.

APPLE, KURRAWOOD & HOMESCHOOLERS A FRUITFUL EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP

The development of a Support Group

by Agnes Leistico (Author of I Learn Better by Teaching Myself)

Our support group began in the middle of 1986 when six families started meeting at a local park for mutual support and encouragement. At that time the local public library had a children's librarian who was constantly encouraging us and telling interested patrons about our group so we gradually added more families. We wanted a group that accepted everyone, no matter what their race, creed, lifestyle, or educational philosophy. We chose the name Kings Academy for the group when we found that having a name made arranging field trips simpler.

We were a very simple group with no desire to have officers, bylaws, or dues. Our main purpose was to support each other without any of us looked on as an expert since we felt each family was its own expert. We freely shared any information each had found.

Field trips were fun experiences as were several other spontaneous activities that came up in connection with our country's constitutional bicentennial or other interests within the group. The enduring activity which we began shortly after forming has been to rent the municipal swimming pool for an hour each week for our use. At first it was a struggle to reach the required number of participants in order to rent the pool but we managed. This has become such a popular activity that local homeschoolers now have four different swim times during the week.

> *Our main purpose is to accept all homeschoolers, to make our focus be homeschooling with each family free to choose their own religious preferences and educational philosophy, to support and encourage each other in our homeschooling adventures. As a result of the last several months of turmoil we have been enriched with a greater understanding of the meaning of acceptance of each other. We realise that as we want the freedom to decide about our own children's education, we have to also support other parents to have the same freedom even if we disagree with their decisions.*

For the first couple of weeks we stayed around ten to fifteen families although we would occasionally hear of a few other local families homeschooling on their own. Word spread about the advantages of homeschooling as our youngsters for the most part were visible in the community. Kings Academy became known as a source of information concerning homeschooling. People freely and knowledgeably shared their insights with inquirers.

Shortly after Kings Academy formed a couple of families wanted a Christian emphasis and much more structure so they formed a group at a local church, which became mostly composed of families attending that church (a number of families in that church became homeschoolers). That group folded about two or three years ago. Many of those families who continued homeschooling subsequently joined Kings Academy.

About that time there was a great swelling of interest in homeschooling in the community so we were faced with many, many newcomers. I started a newsletter late in 1989 so that information could more accurately be spread to the large number of families. I started by sending it to 25 families and by the summer of 1990 it was going to 40 families. By the last issue that I edited (summer of 1991) I was sending it to 65 families! A new editor took over, I don't know her figures, but I do know the number of families homeschooling has grown even more.

The purpose of the activities was not only to tell when activities were, but also to give the youngsters a chance to contribute (which they did) to explain activities (so everyone had the same facts), to bring us closer to each other, and to provide additional supportive information. The first issue contained copies of the California educational code as it applies to homeschoolers. Now the newsletter has become simply a calendar of events, as that was what certain members preferred.

The 1990-91 school year was a bumpy year for Kings Academy because we had grown so very much. People had differing ideas of what they expected from a support group. A large segment preferred to have their support come from religious aspects as well as a very structured way of education. They have since formed the Faith CHEA (California's Christian Home Education Association) support group with numerous types of meetings during the week.

It was an emotional time for those of us who had been associated with Kings Academy for any length of time. Those who chose to go with Faith CHEA were torn in their loyalty as much as those who chose to stay with Kings Academy. Great effort was made by many people to keep the good will between groups and to try for caring and harmony. I believe that this has happened because of the concern of those families involved.

Kings Academy has grown much too large to keep its feelings of closeness and personal support. What seems to be happening now is that other smaller groups are forming to meet the various needs of individual families. This looks to me like a good, healthy thing in the long run. People are working to keep an openness to each other and to the other groups.

The fate of Kings Academy is up in the air at the present. Those who were longtime members look back on the early days of closeness and "being in this together" nostalgically knowing that it cannot be brought back in the same way that we remember it. Growth can at times be painful, but we are hoping for better things in the future. The pain of separation is diminishing.

A small group of families decided to meet each month to discuss how to apply interest-initiated learning, (or natural learning or whatever term you like to give it). Now, as the months go by it looks like this group is going to evolve into an entirely different group that may take on the King's Academy membership with a new name. Kings Academy served its purpose and is looked on with gratitude by those of us who first conceived it but now it is time to move forward.

In our discussions over the last few months we have determined that our main purpose is to accept all homeschoolers, to make our focus be homeschooling with each family free to choose their own religious preferences and educational philosophy, to support and encourage each other in our homeschooling adventures. As a result of the last several months of turmoil we have been enriched with a greater understanding of the meaning of acceptance of each other. We realise that as we want the freedom to decide about our own children's education, we have to also support other parents to have the same freedom even if we disagree with their decisions.

REPRINTED FROM HOME EDUCATION MAGAZINE • September-October 1992 edition. Editors Mark and Helen Hegener P.O. BOX 1083 Tonasket WA 98855 U.S.A.

Australian Homeschooling support groups, newsletters, events and contacts

compiled by Jo-Anne Beirne

Australian Capital Territory

Ainslie
Jo Boehm 16 Stephen St. Ainslie 2602
06 248 5962
Bonython
Vanessa & Drew Corrigan 23 Bardoph St
Bonython 2905
Cook
Maureen Tully publishes "**Welcome Home Australia** " a magazine for Christian families P.O. Box 768 Jamison Centre ACT 2614 also holds regular homeschool meetings Ph 06 251 3159
Macquarie
Canberra Home Education Network
holds regular meetings and functions.
Publishes "**Homework**" magazine, networks, resources, news and information.
Claire Powell 44 Allman Circuit Macquarie 2614 06 251 6663
Spence
Mary Peemoeller 1 Trenwith Cl. Spence 2615
Watson
Wendy & Steve Hodgman 062 479 358

NEW SOUTH WALES

Adventist homeschoolers
Beverley Hogg 060 290 167
Albury
Janet Barnett 060 216 950
Annangrove
Louise Oliver 654 1414
Armidale
Sue Vile 067 724 769
Avalon Beach
Renee Cowell 918 8453
Bathurst
Marcelle Foundling 063 322 132
Bilpin
Judith Chorley 045 672 124
Blue Mountains music/art group
Rosa Geenen 047 396403
Blue Mountains
Sue Cartwright 047 396650
Bondi
Jennie Mullins 389 7249
Broken Hill
Kylie Green 76 Williams St. 2880
Carlingford/North Rocks
Marj Taberner 868 1218
Frances Calvert 871 8497 meetings for homeschoolers in this area.
Central Coast Group Activities
Peter & Lily Nesbitt-Hawes (043) 621473 meetings for homeschoolers in this area
Forestville
Robyn Wigmore 451 5671. A group for homeschoolers with younger children in this regional area.
Gifted & Talented Homeschoolers
Esther Nott 487 2975; Maria Jenkins 939 1031 & Christina Patriarca 387 1590
Gilgandra
Jill Alroe 068 47 1289
Grafton
Kerry Pothin 066 425 774
Greenacre
Ann Gippel 707 34 37
Goulburn
Sharon Bell 048 219403
Goulburn Fr. De La Tour supportive traditional Catholic priest P.O. BOX 417 Goulburn 2580. Ph: 048 295 177

Homeschoolers Australia
Jo-Anne Beirne publishes the **Australian Homeschool Journal** 40+ pages supports the right of all parents to homeschool and all children to a high quality education, provides information about resources, networking, legal and practical issues with an exploratory bias towards unstructured learning. Phone 02 629 3727 Fax 02 629 3278 Subscription $30 for 6 issues. Regular seminars for new homeschoolers and about unstructured learning.

* Regular monthly support group get togethers & sports days for older and younger children at Kellyville Sports ground Memorial Drv. Kellyville contact Dodie Conway 6394858.

*Annual Homeschool Picnic Day 29th November 1992 Kellyville Sports ground Memorial Drv. Kellyville contact Dodie Conway 6394858

Agent for **The John Holt Book and Music Store**- free catalogue available 150 titles in all subject areas that concern homeschoolers from P.O. BOX 420 Kellyville 2153 N.S.W..

Agent for the books and video of **Dr Raymond and Dorothy Moore** - Home Grown Kids etc. Free catalogue available from P.O. BOX 420 Kellyville 2153 N.S.W..

Homeschool Network
which publishes the **Homeschool Network Newsletter** a 10+ pg info newsletter that details excursions, meetings, contacts etc. mostly in the Sydney region (send S.A.E. for details to Barbara Braathen 17 Francis St. Naremburn 2065 02 436 2057)
Woodstock Community Center Church St., Burwood is the base for some meetings. Lynn Keen 713 2584, Maureen Richardson 8182784, Anne White 045 712107 are also contacts for this group that meets for educational/fun excursions.

Inner City of Sydney group
Colleen Strange Stanmore, regular meetings ring 569 3381

Kellyville
Monthly homeschool meetings at a large park , contact Dodie Conway 639 4858

Kurri Kurri
Carol & Greg Tisdell 049 374385

Macarthur/Camden group
Sue Dowey 046 311180 facilitates regular support group meetings. Sue is also running a homeschooling camp February 26th-28th 1993.

Moss Vale Group
Sue McAulay 048 681 094
Margaret Stone 048 682 2959 regular support group meetings and local newsletter.

Mudgee
Julia Boxx 063 737 686

Mullumbimby
Jodie Watson 066 841 709

Muswell brook
Laurel & Ross Clarke 065 433269

Newcastle Group
Carolyn Arthur 049 665098 regular support group meetings and regional newsletter.

Nimbin and Nth Coast group
Joanne Brugmans 066 897473
Janine Banks Ross Rd The Chanon 2480

Northside Sydney
group meet at Lane Cove National Park, Chris Puffett 876 5914

Pre-school homeschoolers
Enthusiastic parents who have pre-schoolers and who intend to homeschool - happy to talk and support.
Mary Collis Blacktown 621 6285
Fiona Manuel St Marys 623 3257

Queanbeyan
Gail Webb 06 2973128

Quirindi Homeschoolers
Lynn Cherry 067 462284
Lynda Hatfield 067 462 102

Southern Sydney
Debbie Armanious 02 529 2032, regular meetings, bowling, biking and other educational activities for homeschoolers of all ages.

Sussex Inlet
Debby & Steve Ward 044 411 537

Sydney A.C.E. Support Group
for families using the Accelerated Christian Education program, regular meetings Roz & Barry Hancock 627 1308

Tamworth
Contact Dorothy Long 067 66 5149

Toongabbie
Angela Griffiths 688 1850 new group for homeschoolers with younger children in this regional area.

Wahroonga
Angela Edwards 489 0299

Western Sydney group
Rhonda Pritchard 673 3821

Winmalee
Kassandal Toohey 047 543 301

Wollongong
Robyn Brodal Balgownie, 042 840 512
Julie Pinazza Mt Kembla, 042 722696

QUEENSLAND

Beenleigh
Marion Mettes facilitates meetings in the Brisbane area and publishes **Raising Children Our Way** P.O. Box 822 Beenleigh 4207.

Caboolture
Bob Osmak homeschool meetings and legal information & support 074 967 884.

Emu Park
(near Rockhampton) Annual Homeschool camp weekend in June 1993, local newsletter and support group contact Kathy Boles 2 Richard St, Emu Park 4702 Ph: 079 396 213

Gayndah
The Slack Family 071 613 136

Mareeba
Adventist homeschooling support network for information and **Trued Adventist newsletter** Vada Kum Yuen P.O. Box 1252 Mareeba 4880

Jimboomba
Theresa Stevenson 075 469 195

Noosa Heads
Carolyn Gibbs 19 Viewland Drv. Noosa Heads 4567 074 473 343, publishes **The Queensland Home Educator.**

Strathpine
Australian Christian Academy distributors of A.C.E. materials in Aust. Ph: 07 205 7444 Fax 07 205 7331 P.O. BOX 470 Strathpine 4500.

Tamborine Village
Rachel Hearin Lot 40/2 Boomerang Rd Tam. Village 4270

Toowoomba
Ken Woolford 076 384460, non-homeschooling supportive teacher.

Townsville
Dr. Barry Harker P.O. Box 314 Townsville 4810, non-homeschooling very supportive academic.

TASMANIA

Cygnet
Jane Stephens "Misty Top" RSD 522
Wattelgrove Rd. Cygnet 7112

New Norfolk
John & Camille Peacock 143, Sharland Ave. New Norfolk 7140 002 492 369 produce **Home Education** magazine informative magazine featuring very interesting resource ideas for practical homeschooling 002 491 579

VICTORIA

Alternative Education Resource Group publishes **"Otherways"** a 30+ page newsletter of legal, resource and practical information. Regular meetings are held at the A.E.R.G. office Ph: 03 818-3674

Catholic Homeschooling materials
(Seton distributor) Bob Dennahy P.O. Whitlands Vic 3733

Creswick
Debra Calisbro
P.O. Box 177 Creswick 3363

Hawthorn 339 William St. 122 Ph: 03 818-3674 regular homeschool meetings (A.E.R.G. office).

Huntly
Jane Raeburn 29 Egans Rd. Huntly 3551

Maiden Gully
Berndette Truscott 054 496 230

Mt Waverley
Marjo & John Angelico, publish **Families Honouring Christ** organise support group meetings, seminars on phonics, discipline etc & in conjunction with L.E.M. etc. for Christian families .. Also organises subscriptions to **The Teaching Home** a high quality conservative Christian magazine from the States with Australian insert. The Angelicos sell other homeschooling resources and books as well 03 543 5237

Nowa Nowa
Annual Labour Day Homeschool Weekend March 1993 contact Rose Tresvaskis 051 557 242

Strathfeldsage
M. Pool Lot 20 Sweenies Creek Rd.Strathfeldsage 3551

Upwey
Ray Dimitroff 100 Old Belgrave Rd. Upwey 3158 03 754 8038

Warburton
Isolde and Peter Petersen
059 665 210

Werribee
Christian Family Homeschool Assoc. Frank & Valerie Marrett publish **The Family School Magazine**, produces homeschooling curriculum materials, dispenses legal information, facilitates an annual seminar and resource day.
Phone 03 741 1490.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Albert Park
Sandra Caut 08 268 7210

Coober Pedy
M. Nagyszollosi P.O. Box 33 Coober Pedy 5723

Kodina
Roslyn Baird 088 212120

Kyancutta
Lenore Stiggants Box 2 Kyancutta 5651

Morphett Vale
Carol Calder 14 Duvall Drv. Morphett Vale 5162 editor of **H.B.L.N.S.A.**

Pt. Lincoln
Andrea Fuller 086 824 418

Prospect
Anne Colangelo 08 269 2358

Reynella
Marianne Gale 08 387 0140

Surrey Downs
Kerry Letherby 08 289 0309

Yankallila
Beverley Paine P.O. Box 371 Yankallila 5203 085 583 212 publishes **Home Based Learning South Australia**, facilitates meetings and camps etc. Camp Sept. 1992

Yankallila
Carol Davidson 085 985 327

WEST AUSTRALIA

Catholic Curriculum Distributor of Mary McKillop materials Kathy Laiber 22 Braborne St. Maddington 6109 09 459 2937

Denmark
Gina Wright. 87 Scotsdale St Denmark 098 481671 publishes the **Rainbow Coast Homeschoolers newsletter** support info.

Donnybrook
Karen Lawtie 097 311 817.

Greenmount
Sue Warner 13 Coongan Ave Greenmount 6056. Enquiries Elva 09 307 1232 and Anita 09 401 7546 publishes the **Home Based Learners Network newsletter,** support group meetings, legal, resource information, camps & seminars.

Manjimup
J. Rennie 097 731 246

Leeming Robyn Tsapazi 18 Shea Grove Leeming 6149

Palmyra Colin Wilson 112 Aurelian St. Palmyra 6157

Tambellup
Lyn Gould very committed homeschooling advocate. P.O. BOX 60 Tambellup 6320

About support groups

Join one ! It can be helpful to spend time with parents and children who are healthy examples of the benefits of home education. But sometimes it can be difficult to find the right group. You may attend a local support group meeting and find that there is great pressure to homeschool in a specific way. In this case you may wish to start your own support group. Even two or three families, with whom you feel comfortable is a good way to be sure of support, encouragement and knowledge about community resources.

from Earl Stevens in Home Education Magazine

If you are looking for homeschoolers to form a support group you will find them. You can begin with notices on a library or community board or an advertisement in a local newspaper and/or through contacting your large state wide support groups.

Q STORES/ HOMESCHOOLERS

P.O. BOX 77 Alexandria 2015

47 BOURKE RD ALEXANDRIA

GOODS AVAILABLE

Goods for purchase will include science, craft, art, mathematics, sports & computer equipment-hardware and software, stationery, encyclopaedias, maps, desks etc. (Text books are not sold by Q stores).

WHAT IS INVOLVED

* If you wish to avail yourself of this service you must be a registered homeschooler and you must nominate an intention to deal with Q stores by filling in the form that accompanies this notice, attaching your registration certificates (all of them if you have more than one child) and sending it c/- **Q STORES P.O. BOX 77 ALEXANDRIA 2015**

* It is ILLEGAL to resell government stores or buy them for anyone else. They must be used for the educational needs of the homeschooler concerned. Orders will be monitored and abuse of this situation by any individual homeschooler will undoubtedly mean loss of the privilege for all homeschoolers.

* Q stores will make available a detailed order list for free to all homeschoolers registered with them so they can decide what they wish to purchase before the 15th December 1992 and again before the 15th May 1993.

* Orders placed with Q Stores MUST be a minimum $100. Payment must be made within 14 days from date of invoice.

*Orders you wish to make from QStores must be received by Q Stores at Alexandria before the closing dates of 30th December 1992 and 30th May 1993. Orders received after this date will not be processed until the following 6 monthly ordering.

* Homeschoolers within the metropolitan area and close to Sydney MUST collect their orders from

Q Stores' warehouse,
47 Bourke Rd
Alexandria.

* It is ALL homeschoolers' responsibility to pay for their goods within 14 days - you will receive a posted invoice. You can pick up your goods, after they are delivered to them, from the following regional contacts:

* **Bathurst** - Marcelle Foundling 063 322 132
* **Grafton** - Kerri Pothin 066 425 774
* **Moss Vale** - Sue & Will McAulay 048 681 094
* **Newcastle** - Carolyn & Carl Arthur 049 665 098
* **Quirindi** - Jim & Lyn Cherry 067 462 284

* Exact delivery date and location will be available from the contacts above. However expected delivery dates are around 30th January 1993 and around 30 th June 1993 .

* Homeschoolers must provide a copy of all their current registration certificates when they INITIALLY apply for registration with Q Stores, (but not with their orders) and undertake to inform Q stores within 14 days if homeschooling is discontinued .

* Once ordered and received goods cannot be returned.

* We have been asked to give nothing in return, nor will we be asked. However it is reiterated that it is ILLEGAL to buy these items for someone else or to resell them.

* If you wish to receive the Q stores order/price list catalogue of goods please send your name and address and register your interest, as soon as possible and preferably before the 15th November, with

Q STORES /Homeschoolers
P.O. BOX 77
ALEXANDRIA 2015 .

Q STORES REGISTRATION FORM

1. On receipt of this form Q Stores will send you, as soon as possible, their catalogue/order /price list.
2. Please return this form before the 15th November 1992 to receive the order/price list.
3. Final registrations will be taken on 15th December for those who wish to receive the order/price list.
4. If you do not register with Q Stores before 15.12.92 you will not be able to participate in the first order
5. Orders for the 1st half of the school year MUST BE in at Alexandria BEFORE 30th December 1992
6. Payment for your order will be due late January or early February.
7. Please attach photocopies of your registration certificates

SURNAME: (and initials)

NAME OF PERSON APPLYING FOR REGISTRATION:

RELATIONSHIP TO REGISTERED CHILD:

FULL ADDRESS & Postcode:

PHONE NUMBER:

NEAREST LARGE TOWN OR CITY (if outside Sydney):

NAMES & AGES OF CHILDREN

Please name the contact person or place you will use to pick up your goods

Please attach photocopies of your registration certificates for EACH of your children (this is to provide some check on the appropriateness of the volume of the order i.e. a family with one six year old does not need 5 basketballs)

Please remember if you wish to receive the Q STORES order/price list/catalogue for Jan-June 1993 you must send your registration in by 15th November 1992. The absolute cut-off date is 15th December 1992

PLEASE POST THIS COMPLETED FORM AND PHOTOCOPIES OF YOUR CHILDRENS' REGISTRATION CERTIFICATES TO

******Q STORES/ Homeschoolers******
P.O. BOX 77
ALEXANDRIA 2015

You are encouraged to inform all registered homeschoolers you know about this option

Books by John Holt

from Australia's John Holt Book & Music Store P.O. Box 420 Kellyville 2153

Catalogues will be posted to all Australian Homeschool Journal subscribers before November 1992

JOHN HOLT

John Holt (1923-85) was a schoolteacher and educational critic whose influential books sparked debate about educational reform and the nature of learning and later gave support and inspiration to homeschoolers.

NEVER TOO LATE, 1978. Back in Print! John's most personal and humorous book. By learning to play the cello at the age of fifty, John wanted to show "...by my own example that we all have greater powers than we think; that whatever we want to learn or learn to do, we probably can learn; that our lives and our possibilities are not determined and fixed by what happened to us when we were little, or by what experts say we can or cannot do."

"Music to the eye and ear... A delightfully subversive book." — *L.A. Times*

"The prettiest package under the Christmas tree... an adventure in adult learning." — *Publishers Weekly*

HOW CHILDREN FAIL, 1964. Revised 1982. New 1988 edition with an introduction by George McGovern. If your children are in school, and having trouble, this will tell you a lot about why. If they are at home, this may help you avoid some of school's mistakes. It will also help you learn the signs in your children's behavior that will tell you if you are still making some of those errors. .

HOW CHILDREN LEARN, 1967. Revised 1983. How little children figure things out for their own satisfaction with little or no help, before their intelligence and curiosity is crippled by having to learn under orders, for praise and reward. The original text, plus much important new material.

FREEDOM AND BEYOND, 1972. 1) What freedom means in daily life, and some of the tensions it creates; and 2) why schools can't cure poverty, and only make it worse. Contains the essay "Three Kinds of Discipline," which many writing textbooks reprint as a prime example of analytical writing. Fascinating chapters on "Authority," "Discipline," "Deschooling and the Poor," and more.

ESCAPE FROM CHILDHOOD, 1974. The case for treating children like real people, not pets and slaves, and for making available to them adult rights & responsibilities. One of John's most controversial books, its logic and startling conclusions will make you think twice about "childhood."

INSTEAD OF EDUCATION, 1976. How communities can provide exciting and simple alternative resources for learning, in place of destructive compulsory schooling. This book points clearly towards John's later thinking about homeschooling as the most hopeful path for changing education.

TEACH YOUR OWN, 1981. How and why many people have taken their children out of school, and how they have helped them learn at home. Answers to most common objections. Legal advice, court rulings. Includes samples of successful homeschooling proposals. *The* homeschooling handbook.

LEARNING ALL THE TIME, 1989. John Holt was working on this book before his death and it was completed using his articles in GWS and other previously uncollected writing. It demonstrates that children, without being coerced or manipulated, can and do pick up from the world around them "the Basics." John suggests simple ways anyone can give children the slight assistance they may need to learn reading, writing, math, science, and music.

"A capstone to his ten books about education." — *NY Times*

SHARING TREASURES: Book reviews by John Holt, Ed. by P. Farenga and J.P. Holcomb. A selection of introductions to books and book reviews from 1965 - 1985. You can read John's thoughts about one-room schoolhouses (his intro to *My Country School Diary*), inner-city schools, teaching and learning, and much more. Collected from sources such as *The N.Y. Review of Books*, *Harpers*, and *GWS*. John Holt's personal recommendations of homeschooling resources.

A LIFE WORTH LIVING: Selected Letters of John Holt, ed. by S. Sheffer. These letters - which begin in 1945 and span the next four decades - show John's active mind at work and also serve as a record of a fascinating period in recent history. This material has not been published before in any form.

"Susannah Sheffer's well-edited and perceptively introduced collection of John Holt's letters invites us to acquaint (or reacquaint) ourselves with one of the most complex and admirable of these educational pioneers [from the '60s]...
—*Teachers and Writers*, Sept.-Oct. '91

"Worth reading for those involved in the Herculean and Sisyphean ordeal of educating the young and not so young."
—*Whole Earth Review*, Fall 1991

"I find something in almost every letter that I want to share with someone."
— L.H., Illinois

"*[A Life Worth Living]* is really the most inspirational thing I've read in a long time. It is a truly unusual experience to learn about a life and to admire it completely and without reservation." - A.G., New York

"It gives us as real a John Holt as can possibly be done." - J.A., Illinois

"I'm finding it to be one of those life-changers of a book." S.H., Minnesota

"...*[Sharing Treasures is]* my favorite collection of his writings."
— *The Home School Source Book*

"*Sharing Treasures* is particularly nice to read and valuable." — John T. Gatto

THE EDUCATION OF JOHN HOLT, Mel Allen. An accurate and warm biographical and character portrait of John, published in *Yankee Magazine* 1981. Seven pages.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The Learners' Manifesto

from the book Insult to Intelligence

by Frank Smith

(1) The brain is always learning. We learn exactly what is demonstrated by people around us. Schools must stop trying to teach through pointless drills, activities, and tests.

(2) Learning does not require coercion or irrelevant reward. We fail to learn only if we are bored, or confused, or if we have been persuaded that learning will be difficult. Schools must be places where learning can take place naturally.

(3) Learning must be meaningful. If we understand, then we learn. Schools must change themselves, not try to change us, to ensure we understand what we are expected to learn.

(4) Learning is incidental. We learn while doing things that we find useful and interesting. Schools must stop creating environments where we cannot engage in sensible activities.

(5) Learning is collaborative. We learn by apprenticing ourselves to people who practice what they teach. Schools must stop trying to deliver instruction mechanically. If teachers cannot teach, there must be better teachers, not more tests and programmatic instruction.

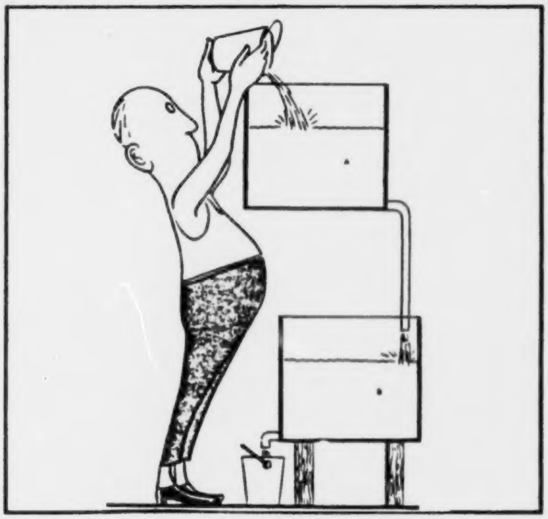
(6) The consequences of worthwhile learning are obvious. We demonstrate the worthwhile things we learn by engaging in those activities. Schools, teachers and parents should not have to rely on marks, scores or tests to discover if we have learned.

(7) Learning always involves feelings. We remember how we feel when we learn and when we fail to learn. Schools must not treat learners like battery hens or like machines.

(8) Learning must be free of risk. If we are threatened by learning, then the learning will always threaten. Schools must recognize that continual testing is intellectual harassment.

"We underrate our brains and our intelligence. Formal education has become such a complicceted, self-conscious and overregulated activity that learning is widely regarded as something difficult that the brain would rather not do. Teachers are often inclined to think that learning is an occasional event, requiring special incentives and rewards, not something that anyone would normally engage in given a choice. Such a belief is probably well-founded if the teachers are referring to their efforts to keep children moving through the instructional sequences that are prescribed as learning activities in school. But reluctance to learn cannot be attributed to the brain. Learning is the brain's primary function, its constant concern, and we become restless and frustrated if there is no learning to be done. We are all capable of huge and unsuspected learning accomplishments without effort."

Frank Smith



Frank Smith is not a homeschooling advocate, rather he is a specialist in reading instruction and a school reformer. Other good books by Frank Smtih are Insult to Intelligence , Reading Without Nonsense and Joining The Literacy Club.

But... How DoYou Know If They're Learning?

Sue Smith-Heavenrich

When I was teaching in schools, giving tests was part of the game. Having been a rather poor test-taker myself I'd developed an aversion to fill-in-the-blanks and true/false - I'd rather write a lengthy discourse or prepare some science exhibit. And so it was that upon beginning a new year at a new school I found myself contemplating stacks and stacks of test booklets full of multiple choice questions, designed to follow along with the text. This stuff was clearly too good to throw out - so I took it to the local recycling station.

Like purple loostrife, however, tests are invasive. They expand to fill an area that formerly gave shelter to creative projects and self-evaluation. Once part of the nature of things they're hard to get rid of. Thus it did not take long until my courses too were defined by midterms and finals, with lots of quizzes thrown in so the students would have "something to fall back on" should they do poorly on an exam. Not my idea of how to teach, but as new kid on the block I was told quite bluntly to shelve my radical ideas and see how things were done.

Form should follow function, and so the way we teach should be a result of the learning that is going on. Too often the reverse is true and learning is circumscribed by the teaching. From the student we hear, "will this be on the test?" Parents want numerical evidence that their child is learning (and is worth the thousands of dollars of tuition invested). Administrators want reassurance that their teachers are not "too easy" and that the students will be ready for the rigors of college.

Testing becomes, if not *the* focus of school, at least a major part of school life. We introduce a topic, lecture, discuss, do an experiment, and just when the interesting questions pop up it's time to have the test and move on to the next topic. Perhaps the saddest result isn't that the test is course-driven, but that the test indicates a false sense of closure. Rarely will anyone go on to investigate further.

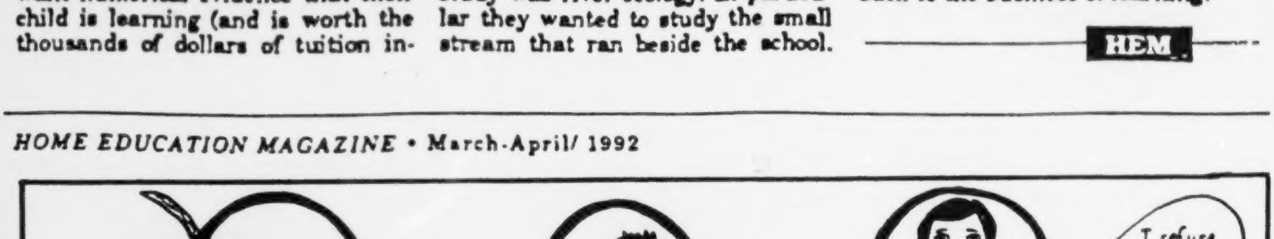
I tried to subvert the system as best I could... there was hot cocoa and cookies to munch, hands-on lab problems, short essay questions, and unlimited time for completing the exam. I felt benevolent, my students were more relaxed, but we did little to change the problem of test-driven schooling.

I have seen hard-working students accomplish amazing things in situations where tests were not required. In particular I recall an ecology course I once taught. Or perhaps "sat in on" would be a more apt description. This was at an alternative school, my introduction to teaching, and I was encouraged to try new ideas.A handful of students wanted to study "ecology," a pretty broad subject, but as our first class meeting progressed it became clear that what they really wanted to study was river ecology. In particular they wanted to study the small stream that ran beside the school. Seems that the state was planning to reclassify the stream and allow more pollution (it was not a town water supply). Coincidentally there was increased development near the local ski area, and my students were absolutely convinced that something fishy was going on.

So they got busy reading, and interviewing local business-folk, and talking with an environmental lawyer. They wrote up field notes and the only tests we did were chemical analyses of the stream. Did the students learn? One needs only to change the inflection: did the students learn! One student, labelled "dyslexic," magically learned to read so he could work with the local environmental group - and order supplies from the science catalogs. Those who swore they'd *never* take chemistry had great fun with nitrites and hydroxides. Without tests there were no stop signs to indicate that "enough" had been learned, and I even overheard them discussing stream ecology at meals. (The only other time I ever heard students discuss a course-related issue was when I asked whether girls smiled more than boys.)

My ecology students were not top scholars - quite the opposite. But given an environment where they could define their goals, and freed from the anxiety of testing, they blossomed. Maybe it's time we agree to a test-ban treaty and get back to the business of learning.

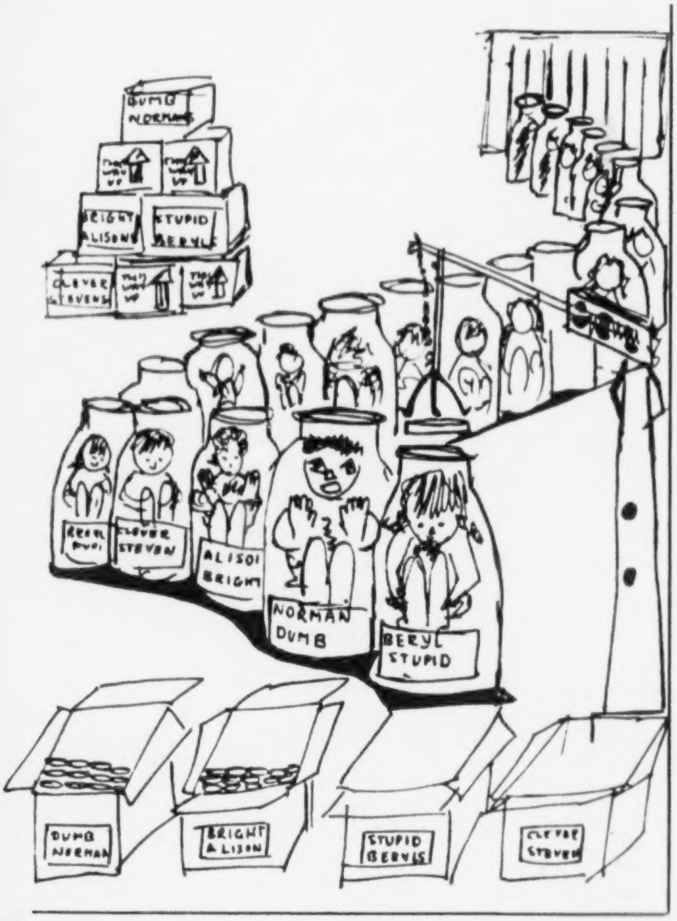
HOME EDUCATION MAGAZINE • March-April/ 1992


I refuse to jump through the testing hoop!

from **The Good Behaviour Book for Schools** Appendix 18

Labelling

'I Wouldn't Have Seen it if I Hadn't Believed It' - the title of this article by G. Foster, J. Ysseldyke and J.H. Reese *(Exceptional Children*, April, 1978.) rather cleverly sums up the problems of labelling students. The authors describe an experiment where 38 graduate and undergraduate education students were divided into two groups. One group was told that a 'normal' child seen on a video was normal. The other group was told that the same child was emotionally disturbed. The students were asked to rate the child on a number of measures. Those who believed that the child was emotionally disturbed rated the child more negatively. Interestingly, the authors claim that the students in the experiment had previously been exposed to the pioneering work in this area by **R. Rosenthal and L. Jacobson who wrote Pygmalion in the Classroom,** Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1968, considered at the time to be a classic statement about labelling or the 'self-fulfilling prophesy'.



The following article appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald, August 17th 1985

Don't give a child a bad name

by Richard Glover

A study published in the *British Journal of Education Psychology has* asked whether teachers are influenced by the Christian names of their pupils when they mark essays. The researchers - P.G. Erwin of Manchester Polytechnic and A. Caley of Manchester University - first tried to establish which names were generally considered attractive by Britons.They then went on to test whether there was any correlation between attractive names and high marks.

They began by asking 50 undergraduates to rate 80 first names, giving them marks from one to seven on a scale of attractiveness. All the undergraduates were Anglo-Saxon, as were all the names. The two male and two female names which had attracted extreme reaction - the names on the bottom and top of the list - were selected for the second part of the study. The most attractive names, as rated by the undergraduates, were Alison and Steven. The most unattractive were Beryl and Norman.

A sample of six essays written by nine and 10-year olds were labelled with one of the four names or left unlabelled. Erwin and Caley then presented the essays for marking to a group of 36 female and 36 male undergraduates from Manchester's Polytechnic and University.The results confirmed the researchers' fears. Essays supposedly penned by the Alisons and Stevens were given higher marks by all participants then the unnamed essays.The essays labelled Norman and Beryl received the lowest marks of all.

The researchers concluded that a system of anonymous marking should be introduced in important school examinations. But they also noted that the findings probably indicated the pervasive power of Christian names. An 'unattractive' name was likely to affect a child in many more ways than simply school marks - including their self-image, social standing and reactions to others.

This information contributed
by Bev Hartington.

University entrance in Australia for Homeschoolers

by Jo-Anne Beirne & Anna Adams

In 1991 Anna Adams and I wrote to every University in Australia requesting information about access to these institutions for homeschoolers. It has to be remembered that the Registrars, who in the main replied to our queries, had no real understanding of the concept of homeschooling or what it entails.The following are excerpts from all those Universities who replied.

Monash University, Janice A. Dunn Registrar
" We have a Direct Entry Scheme for "Alternative Year 12" students.............In some exceptional cases (where there is concrete evidence of outstanding talent) the Academic Board of the University has a discretion under Statute 6.1.1. to confer matriculation status............. More information on curriculum and assessment would be required before any policy decision on homeschooling could be made.

The Australian National University, R.V. Dubs Registrar
"Applications from students who do not meet the University's minimum entry requirements, in terms of Year 12 scores calculated by State authorities, are normally submitted to the Admissions Committee for special consideration. The Admissions Committee is concerned, in these cases, to assess the student's potential for tertiary level study..............I would suggest that students considering applying to the University contact the Admissions office well in advance of the year in which they hope to enter so that arrangements can be made for a submission to the Admissions Committee......... You should be aware that all Faculties have quotas and if the Admissions Committee grants general admission to the University this does not neccessarily guarantee an offer of a place in a preferred Faculty.........."

James Cook University of North Queensland, T.J. Rogers Director Academic Services.
"Our university admits non-matriculants under a scheme known as provisional admission. Applicants are generally assessed via interview with account taken of previous education and work experience. In some areas applicants are required to complete an essay and successful completion of an aptitude test may be an advantage........Applicants may apply for provisional admission to all our courses. There are limited numbers of provisional Admission applicants admitted to some courses such as Law and Psychology........... No minimum age stipulation is set for this form of admission."

Deakin University, Geelong Victoria; R.G. Burrows Head of Student Centers.
"For applicants who are under 21 years of age and seeking entry to undergraduate courses there is an alternative method for satisfying university entrance requirements........"

The University of Queensland, Patricia A. Meaney Deputy Academic Registrar.
"Entrance to an undergraduate course at the Uni. of Qld is the result of satisfying two requirements. The first, the course-specific subjects pre-requisites (a pass at Year 12 level), the second an entry score and consequent admission to a quota place. This University has, as a matter of custom, always been more concerned with satisfaction of the subject pre-requisites............The competition for places in all undergraduate courses at this University has meant that the acceptance of non-award enrollments have been limited to students alreay enrolled at another tertiary institution, who are completing courses and transferring the credit to the home institution. For the same reason the flexible admissions policy adopted by some of the larger, privately endowed tertiary institutions in North America, have not been feasible at Queensland University where Commonwealth policy determines the number of places available fo each course in each year."

University of Wollongong, T.J. Brew Manager Student Services.
"We do not have any age restrictions on applicants except that they had completed a regular secondary schooling........ "

The University of Adelaide, E.R. Dines Academic Registrar.
"Other than the Special Entry Scheme for "mature" applicants and the Aboriginal Access Scheme, admission to the University's undergraduate courses requires matriculation as a minimum educational standard. However the University has recently completed mergers with the city campus of the South Australian College of Advanced Education and with the Roseworthy Agricultural College both of which offer some courses for which this is not the case. ...."

The University of Western Australia, Jim Mitchell Director of Admissions
"We would consider all homeschooled students on an individual basis for entry to courses here but, as entry to all of our courses is competitve, they would be unlikely to succeed in gaining places unless they completed some recognised university entrance qualifications. ...."

The University of New South Wales, I.R. Ray Registrar and Deputy Principal
"At present the University of New South Wales does not have a policy regarding the admission of students who do not satisfy the following requirements............ The N.S.W. H.S.C. or equivalent ..... The University also accepts other qualifications e.g. interstate and international qualifications. Your letter raises some interesting issues which will be brought to the Attention of the relevant authorities."

The Flinders University of South Australia, Marie Gorman Admissions Officer.
"We do have alternative admissions paths....."

University of Western Sydney, Garry St. Lawrence Manager Academic Administration.
Our admission requirement for undergraduate courses for applicants who do not satisfy mature age criteria, is satisfactory completion of the N.S.W. Higher School Certificate or equivalent. The definition of equivalent qualifications can be set from time to time by Academic Committee and currently includes all interstate final high school examinations and a range of overseas qualifications such as A levels, the International Baccalaureat and the Malaysian STPM. For entry to our Visual and Performing Arts courses, assessment is based on portfolio/ audition/ interview and is not dependent on HSC score........

University of Tasmania, C.J. Chapman Registrar
.........The University recognises qualifications such as the International Baccalaureat and some overseas assessments like those awarded in Hong Kong, The U.K., Singapore and Malaysia.............Finally the practice of ranking hoomschooled students in their home state universities will be pertinent to deliberation here...."

University of New England, Ray Esdaile, Administrative Officer
"......I will need some more detailed information on curricula and courses undertaken."

Griffith University, Queensland Phil Rowan Student Secretariat
"..............Applicants who are not eligible for standard admission may apply for special admission to programmes of the University on the grounds of academic, occupational, learned or other achievement on the grounds of personal aptitude for study. Each case for special consideration is considered on its individual merits. The University does not conduct entrance examinations. However, special consideration applicants can sit for a Special Aptitude Test (QSAT) conducted by the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC)and results will be taken into consideration along with other information provided by the applicant..........As homeschooled students do not receive results which can be converted into a comparable score to allow ranking with other applicants, these students are considered on an individual basis. To allow the University the best possible opportunity to consider such an applicant, application forms should include as much relevant and detailed information as possible that could aid in making a fair assessment. This should include detailed information about study undertaken, syllabus, test results, and any details that indicate the student's potential to succeed at tertiary study. Sitting the QSAT is strongly recommended."

SUMMARY

1. There are already many precedents of students entering Eastern State universities without sitting the standard matriculation exam. Obviously such a thing is not going to be widely advertised in case more school students decide to take this path and because of the high cost of assessing non-matriculation students.

2. Now that homeschooling in N.S.W. has the same standing as schooling in private or state schools there would be a strong case for discrimination if a N.S.W. University decided to refuse entry without proper consideration.

3. For Universities that are particularly intractable it might be worthwhile to be approved for study by those that do offer alternative admissions pathways and then apply to the University of choice.

4. If you have any other information that would help homeschoolers in this area, please contact us at Homeschoolers Australia P.O. BOX 420 Kellyville 2153.

OTHER INTERESTING BOOKS TO READ ON THE TOPIC OF FURTHER EDUCATION

The Question is College by Herbert Kohl

Your Hidden Credentials by Peter Smith Ed.D

The Teenage Liberation Handbook by Grace Llewellyn

Homeschooling for Excellence & Hard Times in Paradise by David & Micki Colfax

Buying curriculum materials on a budget or
How to get maximum value for your education dollars

by Sally A. Herigstad

reprinted from the April-May edition of 'The Teaching Home'

I'm a sucker for educational products. After six years of teaching. I am no longer tempted by dresses and dinner dates—you can find me at the book store with armloads of goodies. Sometimes I have a small educational budget and sometimes I can spend a little more. But never do I need another game, map, book or tape that will sit on the shelf and make me feel guilty every time I see it !

Here are a few suggestions from the home-school teacher who wanted it all- and collected most of it in the spare bedroom.

1. Don't buy too much at once. Therewill be other sales. And you don't save that much buying it now.
2. So you did buy all that at once: well stash it away. Dole out the goodies little by little and they'll go further.
3. Avoid ordering materials sight unseen whenever possible (unless there is a good return guarantee). Somebody in the homeschool group has probably tried it and will be happy to let you look at it.
4. Don't buy special materials to teach things that kids learn naturally (and probably already know). Why teach colors or big, bigger, biggest ? Have you ever met a child who didn't know which cake was the biggest ?
5. Before you buy any material ask:
   - Could I make this myself? (Manipulatives, flashcards, many science kits.)
   - Could I teach this another way just as easily ? (Talking about verbs in the car rather than a computer verbs game.)
   - Do we have time to use this, really?
   - Where are we going to keep this?
   - Could we borrow this book from the library or a friend ? Almost all books can be obtained through interlibrary loans.
   - How long will this be used? Some material is good for ten minutes, some is outdated in ten months and some will be used for ten years. I now try to spend more money on literature, wonderful nature and how-it-works books and so on to supplement grade specific schoolbooks. My motto is: Buy books we can't outgrow!
6. Never buy material just because it makes you look more like you're really teaching school! The proof that you are teaching will be in your children not in the rows of finished workbooks and completed curriculum. The curriculum you choose must be your tool—not your master.

Granted, it would be more fun to stock up all at once on language tapes, musical instruments, cameras, dark room supplies, computers, ready-made tennis courts, private pools, horses. Well maybe some other year. Once you decide what the necessities are, you can budget for what's important to you. With the money you save from unnecessary supplies, you may he able to encourage a real interest, such as astronomy. Remember for the price of a stack of books you can buy a decent telescope which your children will never outgrow and may inspire the whole family's learning.

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These illustrations are from
David Macaulay's fantastic and
fascinating book

      The Way Things Work
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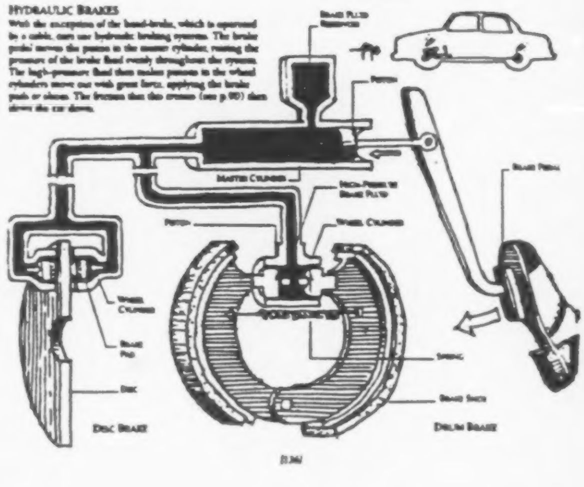

Evaluating your homeschooling child's progress

by Jo-Anne Beirne

Every homeschooling parent has at one time or another been asked or asked themselves the question, "How are the children going academically? Have you had them tested lately ? Are they really learning anything? How do you know you are teaching effectively?"

Can schools can tell that a child is learning ?

The inquisitors presume that because a child going to school is generally subjected to a continuous flow of tests, quizzes, and graded assignments that teachers and schools can provide easy answers to all the above questions. Tests do make it easier for teachers to monitor a child's progress through the curriculum and to assess the short term memory of a student. But no test is effective at deciding how much a school child has learned in the long term, in fact there is no guarantee that swotting for a test provides long term learning. Tests are to assess adequate regurgitation of what has been taught over a short period, with a maximum time period of ten months. Furthermore, tests cannot assess the broad learning that a child may be achieving in the home and the community if that learning does not fall within the key learning areas and the specified syllabus.

A range of choices

So for many homeschooling parents, there is a problem that can result, on occasions, in insecurity for the teaching parent. There are a few options to choose. You may decide to formulate your own tests, based on the material you are covering and give them to your child. The test can be written or oral or an evaluation based on a conversation with the child. You know what you intended the study to achieve, did it happen? How could you have improved your child's learning and what lessons does it have for your preparation, delivery and interaction when you study the next learning topic ? How did the child like the learning, were there child initiated changes ? etc.

Teaching to the test

Whether it is widely admitted or not, in schools teachers teach to the test i.e. they prepare the students for the types of questions they think they will encounter, because the results on tests are also a measure of the competency of the teacher. Homeschooling parents are fortunately not in this situation- our commitment in time, energy and resources to our children is an adequate measure of our competency. In fact this sort of testing situation in the home is contrary to what most homeschooling parents feel is the responsibility and aim of education. Anyway learning in the home is more flexible, less structured and diverse than learning in a school. Therefore standardised tests, in the home, tend to be unnatural and can't really reflect the kind of broad learning that a homeschooled child is undertaking.

Despite the claims to the contrary by the large testing organisations rarely does any test mean that we have a sure way to tell how much learning is really going on. Many of you, like me, will have done extremely well in tests only to realise 6 months later that we remember virtually nothing of the particulars that we were tested on.

How to evaluate ?

So how can we evaluate our homeschooled children ? One approach is to look at some of your child's written, creative, science, social studies, reading or art work. Compare it with what he or she was reading, writing, drawing, creating, studying, collecting last month, or last year. Concentrate on the content. Is it more complex? Is he or she tackling new information, more detail, new ideas, new structures, selecting more elaborate vocabulary, doing more research, understanding and applying more, asking more questions, solving more problems alone? Even if there are many incongruities, is there a progression that indicates an understanding of how the adult world thinks and does things? It is important to realise that in a subject like math or science, you may be more concerned with the child's ability to internalize concepts and apply them to life.

Another approach is to realise that in the one-to-one teaching situation of the homeschool usually you are able to actually evaluate your child's learning and see progress happen day by day, so you can base your evaluation on your own interaction with your child. My experience has been that this is a most effective way to evaluate. The results of these real evaluations can be noted in a diary e.g. Alison asked a question to-day about engines that came as a result of the air show we saw six months ago. We did more than six hours research on how engines work and how they were developed. She is thinking she would like to build a small engine from scratch" 17.9.92.

Trust

We all need to learn to trust our children's learning especially if they are in a home environment that is rich in resources and committed to education. Furthermore we must also trust our own judgement and evaluation about the progress of our children and be less inclined to give in to those people who apply pressure to force any child and their learning to sit for a supposedly "magical test". The proof is in the pudding and it is a diverse and interesting challenge to try to separate out and evaluate the achievments of a homeschooled child who has been given the encouragement, time and resources to develop their learning in any area as far as they want to take it.

Answers for the critics

The biggest problem of course is answering the critics - relatives, friends etc.. There is some great material questioning the value of standardised testing (including Fairtest & Home Educ. Magazine Mar-April 1992). If your critics are particularly vocal perhaps you can read some of the literature available from your library to answer their concerns.

However, if it is just your confidence that is lacking, questions about "progress and evaluation" can probably be answered with some of the following jargon i.e. develop your "evaluation vocabulary" e.g. My child is good at solving real problems; My child is good at analysing, researching and applying information; My child is good at conceptualizing; sorting, dividing & manipulating various materials; My child is good at applying knowledge and solutions to a variety of real life problems involving people and objects; My child is good at assessing needs and coming up with possibilities in linguistic and mathematical contexts; My child is good at directing and participating in practical activities to do with art, craft & sport ; My child is very capable and further developing his ability to be able to interact with people of all ages and abilities; My child is good at disciplined assessment and complex understanding; My child is good at understanding a broad range of crtieria and processing this information; My child is good at developing new and original solutions to a wide range of problems; My child is good at mastery of physical environments and thinking laterally and creatively, My child is good at becoming creatively involved in the home and community environment; My child exhibits maturing growth in all his mental and emotional skills.

Homeschooling works !

As I made all of these terms up I was thinking of lots of homeschooling children I know for inspiration. Try not to be defensive about the evaluation of your child and what they are learning in the homeschool. Remember that they are achieving so much, and can't help but do so in the one to one situation of the homeschool. P.S. Don't forget to tell the critics the same!

DR. RAYMOND & DOROTHY MOORE

BOOKS FOR SALE

BETTER LATE THAN EARLY (research based information on why children should not start school too early - easy to read) $17 (incl. postage)

EXTRA CASH FOR KIDS (How they can earn it, easy to read for competent readers 10 years and up) $18 (incl. postage)

HOME GROWN KIDS THE BOOK (Steps in parenting) $17 (incl. postage)

HOME GROWN KIDS THE VIDEO (The total picture about homeschooling, interviews with a large range of families who have been homeschooling and still are doing it very successfully. Great gift for sceptical parents) $40 (incl. postage)

HOME MADE HEALTH (Backed by specialists) $20 (incl. postage)

HOME SCHOOL BURNOUT (Interesting, easy to read hard cover about how to prevent burn out and how to cure it.) $28 (incl. postage)

HOME SPUN SCHOOLS (How others homeschooled) $15 (incl. postage)

HOME STYLE TEACHING (Handbook for teachers) $18 (incl. postage)

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SCHOOL CAN WAIT (Research sources on why children should not start school too early) $18 (incl. postage)

If you wish to purchase any of these books please send a cheque or money order for the appropriate amount to **Homeschoolers Australia pty ltd.**
P.O. Box 420 Kellyville 2153
and we will be pleased to send it to you.
ThankYou

A Homeschool Survey

by Jo-Anne Beirne & Anna Adams

The survey was carried out by sending questionnaires to subscribers to the The Australian Homeschool Journal & asking people to respond.

In 1989, we carried out a preliminary survey of Australian homeschooling families with 24 homeschooling families responding to a survey we printed. There were 74 children in these families and an average of 3 children per family. 45 children in all were being homeschooled with only 2 school-aged children going to school.

Of the families, 21 considered themselves to be either low or middle income earners, only 3 estimated that they were from a high income bracket. 2 families were sole parents - mothers, and they were the families that moved most frequently - almost every year.

The parents educational background was for the most part co-educational state - both for primary and secondary. 16 mothers had some tertiary education; 14 had university degrees or college diplomas while 10 of the fathers had university degrees.

The decision to homeschool was made either by the mother or by the parents as a couple. Only one father made the decision to homeschool. The reasons for homeschooling ranged from religious & philosophical to practical concern that schools were not doing their jobs. All of the families thought that homeschooling was a superior educational choice regardless of the schooling options available.

Of the families, 11 families had homeschooled all their lives while the rest had taken their children out of school. All these children were in primary school.

The longest totally homeschooling family had been homeschooling 6 years and the longest for previously-schooled children was four years. No-one in this survey was homeschooling at high school level.

22 of these families had exemptions - only 2 had not and did not intend to apply.

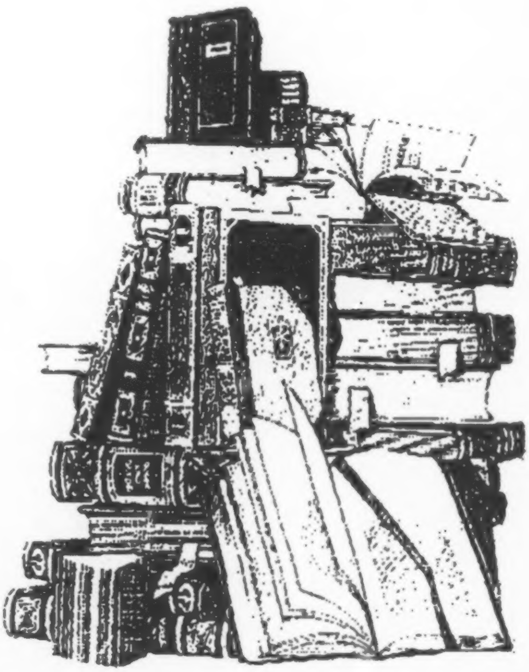
18 of the families found their local inspectors helpful or tolerant - only 4 believed their inspectors were difficult.

A quarter of the families thought the decision to homeschool was totally the parents - one even commenting that consulting with the children was an abdication of responsibility. However, the other 75% thought the children's attitude would be considered and whether or not this would carry any weight would depend on age. Only 15% thought the choice to go to school would be totally the child's i.e. 3 families.

Concerning the daily formal tuition, 20 of the 24 mothers did 80% or more. 3 did 70% and only one said she did 60%. So the most any father did of formal tuition was 40%. Mostly they did 20% or less. 8 mothers did 100% - 6 fathers did none at all.

Of the informal learning activities, fathers did a lot more. No mother did 100% of the informal work but they still did 50% or more of informal activities. Only one father did more than 50% of the informal activities and he did 90%.

We are intending to do another survey in the not too distant future.



Homeschoolers Supporting Homeschoolers

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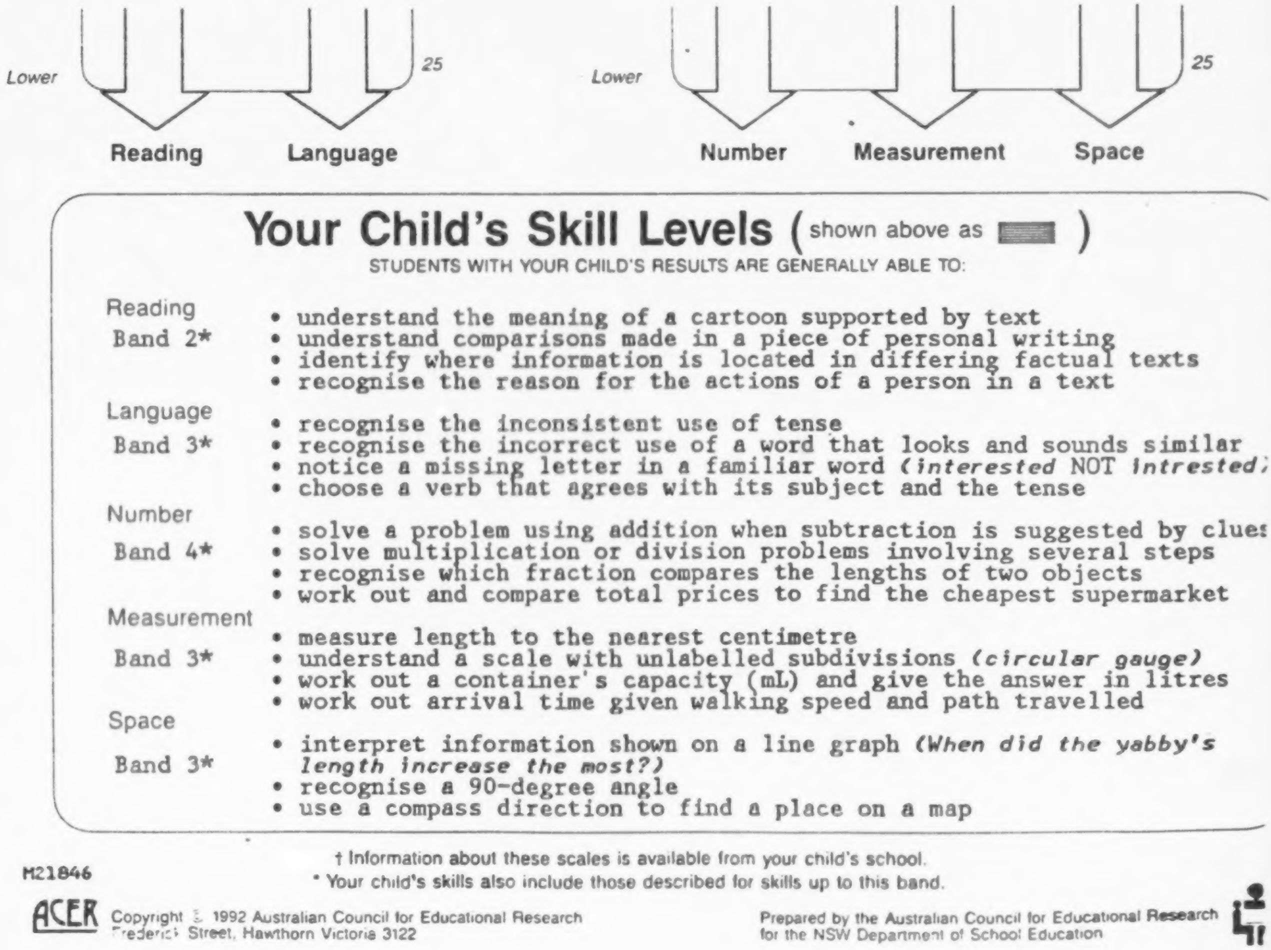
Do you want to be listed in this section?

If so, send your details to Homeschoolers Australia P.O. BOX 420 Kellyville 2153.

A friend recently received her child's report for the Year 6 Basic Skills Test and I thought you might like to read about the levels of skills expected in *Reading * Language *Number *Measurement *Space.

It is possible for homeschoolers to have their children sit the Basic Skills Test if they so desire. Contact should be made with the Education Department early in the year - allowing plenty of time to arrange the details.


Lower
25
Reading
Language
Lower
25
Number
Measurement
Space

Your Child's Skill Levels (shown above as ▨)

STUDENTS WITH YOUR CHILD'S RESULTS ARE GENERALLY ABLE TO:

Reading
Band 2*

- understand the meaning of a cartoon supported by text
- understand comparisons made in a piece of personal writing
- identify where information is located in differing factual texts
- recognise the reason for the actions of a person in a text

Language
Band 3*

- recognise the inconsistent use of tense
- recognise the incorrect use of a word that looks and sounds similar
- notice a missing letter in a familiar word (*interested* NOT *intrested*
- choose a verb that agrees with its subject and the tense

Number
Band 4*

- solve a problem using addition when subtraction is suggested by clues
- solve multiplication or division problems involving several steps
- recognise which fraction compares the lengths of two objects
- work out and compare total prices to find the cheapest supermarket

Measurement
Band 3*

- measure length to the nearest centimetre
- understand a scale with unlabelled subdivisions *(circular gauge)*
- work out a container's capacity (mL) and give the answer in litres
- work out arrival time given walking speed and path travelled

Space
Band 3*

- interpret information shown on a line graph *(When did the yabby's length increase the most?)*
- recognise a 90-degree angle
- use a compass direction to find a place on a map

† Information about these scales is available from your child's school.
* Your child's skills also include those described for skills up to this band.

M21846

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Frederick Street, Hawthorn Victoria 3122

Prepared by the Australian Council for Educational Research for the NSW Department of School Education

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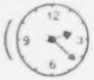
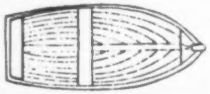
Skill Band	Reading	Language	Number	Measurement	Space
	STUDENTS IN EACH SKILL BAND GENERALLY HAVE THE SKILLS DESCRIBED FOR THAT BAND AND THE BANDS LISTED BELOW IT. STUDENTS IN THESE BANDS ARE GENERALLY ABLE TO:				
4 4	• show an understanding of how punctuation can affect meaning • extract information from technical language in a detailed factual text • understand the purpose of a piece of writing when there is competing information • read carefully to sort out competing information in a factual text • detect the meaning of an abstract expression (*"renewable resource"*) • extract information from a table to support a conclusion.	• recognise an inconsistent pronoun where another subject and pronoun intervene in the text • recognise the common misuse of a pronoun (*your*) instead of the contracted word (*you're*) • notice a missing question mark • recognise that 'y' becomes 'i' in the past tense of some verbs (*tried* NOT *tryed*) • notice where double letters should not be used (*careful* NOT *carefull*)	• solve a problem using addition when subtraction is suggested by word clues • solve a division problem involving several steps including "rounding off" • solve a multiplication problem with several steps • recognise which fraction compares the lengths of two objects • work out total prices and compare them to find the cheapest supermarket • recognise that 14 and 4 are factors of 56	• interpret information to calculate speed (*in km/h*) given distances (*in km*) and times (*in minutes*) • work out the perimeter of a regular shape from a scale drawing • solve problems involving a mixture of measurement units • work out the volume of a model made from blocks where part of the model cannot be seen • work out a total area when the area of one small part is given as an informal unit.	• visualise the result of cutting into paper folded twice (*horizontally and vertically*) • identify the compass direction of an original position from a new position • interpret information shown in a picture graph where a key is used. KEY: ▽ 5 litres • complete a line graph using a given table
3 3	• recognise the writer's focus in a piece of personal or descriptive writing • compare or contrast different points of view in two pieces of writing • show an understanding of a step in a procedure or a description (*by choosing the appropriate drawing*) • select a title to reflect a theme given from different perspectives • draw conclusions to explain the feelings or behaviour of a person in a story • detect meaning of expressions in context	• recognise the inconsistent use of tense • recognise the incorrect use of a word that sounds and looks similar (*a quiet park* NOT *quite*) • notice a missing apostrophe in a contracted word commonly confused with a similar word (*you're* NOT *youre*) • notice a missing letter in a familiar word (*interested* NOT *intrested*) • choose a verb that agrees with its subject and the tense	• solve a problem by subtracting decimals where trading is needed (*the difference between 28.4 and 45.7*) • choose the correct coins to give as change in a problem with several steps • round four-figure numbers to the nearest hundred • work out whether to use +, −, ×, ÷ to estimate the answer to a problem • solve a division problem and express the answer in a common sense way (*whole boats* NOT *fractions of boats*).	• measure length to the nearest centimetre • understand a scale with unlabelled subdivisions (*circular temperature gauge*) • work out the capacity of a container (*in millilitres*) and convert the answer (*to litres*) • work out arrival time given walking speed and path travelled	• interpret information shown on a line graph (*When did the yabby's length increase the most?*) • recognise a 90° angle • use a compass direction to find a place on a map.
2 2	• understand the meaning of a cartoon supported by text • understand comparisons made in a piece of personal writing • identify where information is located in different types of factual text • understand imagery used in a story • recognise the reason for the actions of a person in a text • understand the purpose of a factual text • detect a similar theme in two contrasting pieces of writing	• notice the incorrect spelling of a common word (*friends* NOT *freinds*) • notice a missing capital letter at the beginning of a sentence • recognise, given clues, the incorrect use of a question mark • choose the correctly spelt word from words that look or sound similar (*their* NOT *there* or *they're*, *quite* NOT *quit* or *quiet*) • recognise when a compound word is needed (*another* NOT *an other*)	• solve a problem using a simple ratio (*walks 500 m in 10 minutes; how far in one minute?*) • identify decimal fractions between two given whole numbers (*Colour in two numbers which are between 9 and 10* (8.98) (8.07) (9.01) (10.05) (9.75) (11.33)).	• estimate length from a picture drawn to scale • compare masses on a simple balance (*seesaw*) • choose the thermometer showing the most likely temperature (*lunchtime in shade of tree*)	• show an understanding of parallel lines by matching sets of tracks • name the coordinates of a place on a map • follow compass directions to draw a path on a map
1 1	• locate and use information that is clearly stated in a factual text • put together several pieces of information to draw a conclusion • make connections between pieces of information in a story, supported by an illustration • show an understanding of the main theme in a short text • describe the main character in a short factual text, given obvious clues	• choose the correct pronoun that agrees with its subject • choose a familiar verb that agrees with its subject and the tense • recognise a wrong spelling that sounds right (*answer* NOT *anser*) • recognise, given clues, a wrong spelling that looks and sounds similar • choose the adverb commonly used with a familiar preposition (*away from* NOT *behind from*)	• understand the value of each place in five-figure numbers • add two numbers when a word like **more** is given • recognise the same fraction shown by different diagrams.	• convert analogue to digital time ( is 2.22, NOT *2.42* or *3.22* or *4.12*.)	• recognise the simple shapes which combine to make a given shape • give appropriate geometric names for everyday objects • draw a line of symmetry on a shape (*boat*): 

Note 1: Text in italics in this table of skill descriptions relates to questions in the 1992 tests.
Note 2: More information about your child's Basic Skills test results and your child's general performance at school will be available from his or her school.

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Damned if I do and damned if I don't

RELATIONS

MIKE STEVEN

THERE was a time when children respected their parents and looked up to them as role models. I'm not sure when that was, but I saw it on TV once, children referring to their father in deferential tones and addressing him as "Sir". I think it was a film about Eton, but the fact remains, it has happened somewhere in the English-speaking world.

Not any more. The prevailing attitude a 12-year-old holds towards her father is acute embarrassment. This perception is the result of a scientific survey of a population of two, my 12-year-old daughter, Alexandra, and her 12-year-old friend, Joanna.

On Monday evening I made the unforgivable mistake of joining Alex at the Richmond bus stop to accompany her on the 16 kilometre trip home, generously leaving work an hour early to give her the pleasure of her father's company. My arrival beside her on the kerbside was greeted with a glare that would wilt a silk flower — and stony silence.

Joanna to Alex: "Is that your father beside you? How embarrassing. I couldn't stand it if my father came and sat down next to me in public."

And so it was that fears that I had held for my relationship with my daughter became real, and a universal truth about father/12-year-old daughter relationships became apparent.

I could dismiss this as an isolated incident were it not for the recurring comments from Alex to her father that have put something of a damper on our relationships over the last three months.

It began with a similar incident at the start of term when, in a fatherly fashion, I joined her in the bus queue at Gross Vale to accompany her on the school bus. She made a dash for the back seat, determined to put as much distance between her and her father as the length of the bus would allow. I naively assumed she might be concerned that I, too, would be embarrassed by her new green, white and blue school uniform, which in her eyes rates rather lowly on the scale of things in which it is cool to be seen.

Now relations have developed to the state where it seems my very existence on the same planet is a matter causing her some considerable trauma, a phobia which has extended from bus queues and other areas of public open space to the home. A simple inquiry as to the pleasures of her day is received with the same grace and good will as nine-year-old sister Zoe's request to borrow the Walkman and a goodbye kiss in the morning is followed by a rush to the bathroom to wash her face.

Terms of endearment are as welcome as peas on the dinner plate. A sullen, cold silence prevails, though I suspect that it is not just in my imagination that I hear her repeating, "Beam him up, Scotty", as she vainly hopes for some extra-terrestrial force to relieve her of my incommodious presence.

I gave the family dog more reason to resent me the day I drove over him with the station wagon, but it seems that dogs are more forgiving than daughters, and Max came back from the vet as friendly and faithful as ever. Mind you, he knew who cut up the dog food, and being a dachshund, he never did see who was driving the car. But this line of argument presupposes that perhaps I have run over my daughter recently and absent-mindedly failed to apologise.

Conventional wisdom has it that university lecturers do things like that, being somewhat detached from the world, oblivious to the reality of life about us. This is particularly true of those who work with plants and flowers in preference to people. At least I maintain there's nothing about my job, well, nothing that she knows about, that would give her cause for embarrassment.

· I've put the white socks away for ever, but it seems that when it comes to dressing right, you're damned if you do and you're damned if you don't. I've tried my best to be cool, but Country Road jeans and a Number Three haircut don't cut much ice with a 12-year-old. I've offered to give my hair a treatment of Grecian, but it seems that fogeyness is more than follicle deep. The unkindest cuts are reserved for my efforts to preserve some vestiges of Apollonian physique. Nothing is surer to reduce a 12-year-old daughter to mocking, derisive laughter than the sight of her 40-plus father in fluoro Lycra pants.

I'm optimistic things will change. Even Kelly Bundy has the wit to realise that Dads can be played like a piano. Alex will turn on the charm again one day. But there will always be a cost. Today, self-esteem, tomorrow, cold hard cash. I'm not sure which I can afford to lose most.

Contributions to Relations are welcome. They should be 700 words, typed and should use real names of people and places. Pseudonyms will not be accepted. Send to the Agenda editor, Peter Freeman, SMH, GPO Box 506, Sydney 2001.

SOCIALIZATION

The question, "but what about socialization ?" is perhaps the question answered most often by homeschoolers. Personally I always maintain that the socialization in schools is typically poor and not at all like it is in real society where people are integrated vertically for social events, work-wise and in terms of experience. Are there any real world environments where you can exclusively find thirty, 35 year olds in close proximity ? In schools all the social integration is horizontal i.e. 29 other kids all of the same age.

But I was really saddened when I read this article and realised that it is probably true for the relationships of many schooled children with their parents. I believe this sort of "cringe" attitude is created by peer pressure and the fact that children spend so little time with their parents when they attend school, that they lose the time to build respect and devotion that is an essential ingredient in a happy family.

This "parental cringe" has never happened with our twelve year old nor all the many other high school age homeschooled children I know. If the wonderful "socialization" provided by schools makes a 12 year old feel this way about her obviously devoted father - long live homeschool socialization !

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Books about Homeschooling

from Australia's John Holt Book & Music Store P.O. Box 420 Kellyville 2153

Catalogues will be posted to all Australian Homeschool Journal subscribers before November 1992

BETTER THAN SCHOOL, Nancy Wallace. Among the finest books of how homeschooling has worked and what it has been like in one family. Their story is a textbook case of how to deal with difficult school boards. Hardcover.

CHILDREN LEARNING AT HOME, Julie Webb. This researcher writes: " [This book] explores the results of home education for those who undertook it and describes and analyzes the ways in which these results were achieved... Homeschooling appears to be increasingly relevant to a society in which important educational decisions are becoming more and more centralized, with less choice..." Case histories and theoretical background of home education in England, but useful for all of us to see there is no one best way to educate at home.

THE HOME SCHOOL SOURCE BOOK, Donn Reed. A huge collection of international resources and information that is available for free or for fee for homeschoolers. Also included are homeschooling cartoons and the Reed family's homeschooling story. The author writes, "This book lists many items with which we don't agree... but we don't mind telling you where you can buy them if you want them... As you'll see, I have strong opinions. Whether you agree or disagree with me, you'll always know where I stand, and will not be misled by indiscriminate praise and false 'objectivity.'"

HOMESCHOOLING FOR EXCELLENCE, David & Micki Colfax. The family that has sent three homeschooled sons to Harvard. Goes far beyond the media coverage they've received.

HOMESCHOOLING IN THE NEWS, ed. Patrick Farenga. Contains 28 articles (from 1986 - 1/91) on homeschooling from a wide variety of national newspapers and magazines: *TIME, NY* and *LA Times, Washington Post, Boston Globe*, etc. The text of each article is reprinted exactly as it originally appeared. A great gift for skeptics.

TAKING CHARGE THROUGH HOME SCHOOLING, M. Larry & Susan D. Kaseman. A provocative and useful interpretation of what is happening in American education written in the form of a homeschooling handbook. Their experience and clear presentations of practical alternatives will empower you to find a way to homeschool that works for your family and to deal successfully with school authorities. Useful for beginning homeschoolers as well as experienced ones. #1564 $12.95

THE TEENAGE LIBERATION HANDBOOK: How to Quit School and Get a Real Life and Education, Grace Llewellyn. A former teacher shows teenagers what they *can* do through hundreds of examples of what other teens *have* done, and helps readers feel that adolescence can be an exciting time of exploration, discovery, and meaningful work. Wonderful ideas about pursuing science, history, writing, and other subjects in the real world, chapters on college and finding work, and in-depth stories about homeschoolers' lives. Fascinating and useful reading for teens, their parents, and parents of younger children looking ahead to the future. #1630 $14.95

THREE R's AT HOME, Howard & Susan Richman. The rich and detailed story of one family's homeschooling experiences, with much helpful advice for others. Great info about writing their own curriculum, helping kids learn phonics and math, keeping records and staying organized. Many stories first appeared in GWS, and there's lots of new material, too. #1194 $7.95

A TIME TO FLY FREE, by Stephanie Tolan. Josh's unhappiness in school is taken seriously by the adults in his life, and he is allowed to learn at home and to apprentice to a man who helps wounded wildlife. A wonderfully sympathetic and realistic story about a contemporary homeschooler, already much loved by homeschoolers who have discovered it.

LETTERS HOME, Britt Barker. A collection of this teenage homeschooler's articles written for her local newspaper about her adventures in the real world (at a time when her age-mates were cramming for tests). An inspiring account of how she found jobs she wanted without the aid of school credentials. Britt details her travels across Canada, the U.S., and Italy as she apprenticed herself to various scientists engaged in field research. #431 $5.50

SCHOOL'S OUT, Jean Bendell. An English homeschooling mother writes about her family's experiences and the role of homeschooling and schools in general. The perfect balance between first-hand experience and advice. Some surprising famous homeschoolers described.

SCHOOLING AT HOME: Parents, Kids, and Learning, edited by Anne Pedersen and Peggy O'Mara. Explores ways and philosophies of learning, legal issues, methods of teaching at home, and personal accounts of homeschooling. Some articles originally appeared in *Mothering* magazine; some written just for this book. Among the authors included are John Holt, Herbert Kohl, Penny Barker, Thomas Armstrong, the Moores, Patrick Farenga, Nancy Wallace, Kate Kerman, and more!

NEW **WRITING BECAUSE WE LOVE TO: Homeschoolers at Work,** by Susannah Sheffer. How Susannah Sheffer, editor of *Growing Without Schooling*, worked through the mail with homeschooled writers aged 10 to 15, commenting on their stories, poems, and essays and answering their questions about her own writing. Includes many samples of the kids' writing and excerpts from letters in which they reflect on the process of work. Explores such questions as: why self-directed learners sometimes seek out a teacher's help, and why it's important to let kids choose their own teachers; how to give children access to the writing culture; why periods of *not* writing can be valuable.

THE MEDIA

The Daily Telegraph-Mirror 31.8.92

Education Minister Virginia Chadwick is an unabashed admirer of homeschooling "Homeschoolers have strong personal views about the topic (socialization) and I think if they thought they were not coping they would be big enough to admit it"

Many people have sent me a copy of an article that appeared in The Daily Telegraph Mirror 31.8.92 called School's In But Who is Taking Class? The author of this emotional & inaccurate article was Wayne Miller . We feel there were many good reasons for Mr Miller not to have written this article. Often personal issues that have strong emotional components can cloud judgement and reason. It is unfortuate when this happens, that articles are written which solidfy positions, making negotiation difficult if not impossible.

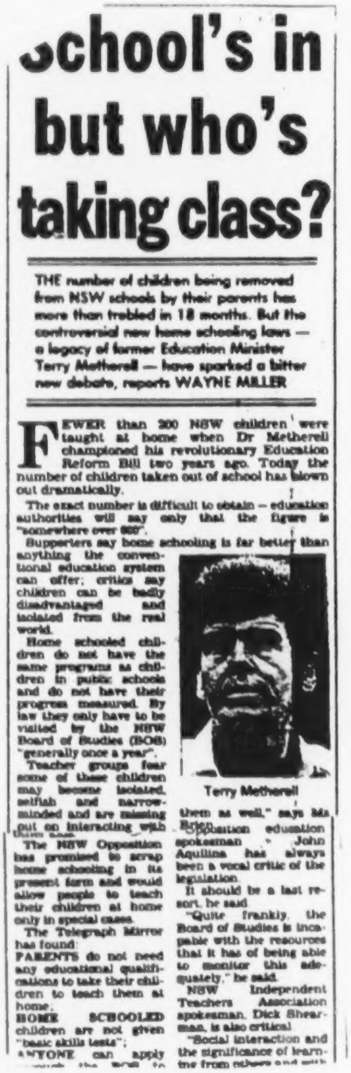
As a result of the article Anna Adams & I complained on behalf of ourselves and other homeschoolers to his editor. Many other homeschoolers have informed me that they did the same. I also took the time to write to Mr Aquilina expressing my disappointment at the attitude of the Labor party. As many people as possible should do the same.

IT IS TRUE
That the Labor party is presently philosophically opposed to homeschooling and while I do not doubt that they may regulate homeschooling more strictly if they get power at the next election I cannot see that they could possibly remove the option altogether given the historical, legal, philosophical and human rights issues involved.

CONCERNED
It is also true that people such as Graham Allpin of the Parents & Citizens Association; Dick Shearman of the Independent Teachers Association & Denis Fitzgerald of the Teachers Federation are going to have "problems" with homeschooling-especially when they have the most to lose by an increase in the numbers of homeschoolers and have made absolutely no effort to find out anything about it. Making them understand and listen will take time. But as our numbers increase, still further, and our confidence grows it will be harder for them to "eliminate"us. I feel that we can make all these people see reason in the long run if we are prepared to stick together and fight any problems that come up.

I believe it was significant that the excellent article the week before about Chris Puffett and her children in the Sydney Morning Herald resulted in two prime time and sympathetic long radio interviews whereas the only radio follow-up of this particular article was on the 4 a.m. 2GB program (no I'm not an insomniac but I have a relative who is).

PROTECT YOUR INTERESTS
Nonetheless, the price of freedom is eternal vigilance and if we can all of us should take every opportunity to influence Labor party thinking and your Labor politicians in particular about the reasons for your objections to their stance against homeschooling.



chool's in but who's taking class?

THE number of children being removed from NSW schools by their parents has more than trebled in 18 months. But the controversial new home schooling laws — a legacy of former Education Minister Terry Metherell — have sparked a bitter new debate, reports WAYNE MILLER

FEWER than 200 NSW children were taught at home when Dr Metherell championed his revolutionary Education Reform Bill two years ago. Today the number of children taken out of school has blown out dramatically.

The exact number is difficult to obtain – education authorities will say only that the figure is "somewhere over 600".

Supporters say home schooling is far better than anything the conventional education system can offer; critics say children can be badly disadvantaged and isolated from the real world.

Home schooled children do not have the same programs as children in public schools and do not have their progress measured. By law they only have to be visited by the NSW Board of Studies (BOS) "generally once a year".

Teacher groups fear some of these children may become isolated, selfish and narrow-minded and are missing out on interacting with

The NSW Opposition has promised to scrap home schooling in its present form and would allow people to teach their children at home only in special cases.

The Telegraph Mirror has found:

PARENTS do not need any educational qualifications to take their children to teach them at home;

HOME SCHOOLED children are not given "basic skills tests";

ANYONE can apply

Terry Metherell

them as well," says Ms Brien.

Opposition education spokesman, John Aquilina has always been a vocal critic of the legislation.

It should be a last resort, he said.

"Quite frankly, the Board of Studies is incapable with the resources that it has of being able to monitor this adequately," he said.

NSW Independent Teachers Association spokesman, Dick Shearman, is also critical.

"Social interaction and the significance of learning from others and with

IF YOU CARE ABOUT THE CONTINUED GROWTH OF HOMESCHOOLING IN N.S.W. PLEASE MAKE THE TIME TO WRITE TO THE FOLLOWING MEN.

"Social interaction and the significance of learning from others and with others is the most important thing that gives you a shared experience of the world" Dick Shearman of the N.S.W. Independent Teachers Association.

Address P.O.BOX 116 Sydney 2001

"homeschooling is atomising childhoods - individual, separate and aloof from the rest of society"
Denis Fitzgerald N.S.W. Teachers Fed. spokesman.
Ph: 287 2100 Fax 267 5221
Address: 300 Sussex St. Sydney 2001

"I see a very great danger in allowing unqualified parents to teach" Graham Allpin Senior Vice President of the Parents and Citizens Assoc.

Address: 210 Crown St Darlinghurst 2010

John Aquilina (Shadow Labor Minister for Education) has always been a vocal critic of the legislation (homeschooling) "Quite frankly the Board of Studies with the resources it has is incapable of being able to monitor this adequately".

Address: 2/46 Railway Rd. Marayong 2148

It is extremely hard to find a forum to allow homeschoolers to address the concerns of these gentlemen, so, I suggest as many homeschoolers as possible write to them asking them to attend the Homeschoolers Australia Picnic 29th November 1992 (see advert on page 39). This will enable these men to really talk to homeschool parents about the positive choices they are making for their children. It will also let them see the so-called "deprived and aloof" children in action.

SAMPLE LETTER ONLY - PLEASE MAKE UP YOUR OWN !!!

Dear Sir

I read your comments about homeschooling in the Telegraph Mirror 31st August 1992. It made me realise that you probably know very little about the option of homeschooling. We are parents who choose this high quality educational option for our children and are very pleased with the results. We would like to invite you to our annual homeschoolers picnic on 29 th November 1992 so that you can meet and talk to a wide range of parents, many of whom are teachers, about the legal alternative of homeschooling. We hope this may help to dispel any misinformation you have about homeschooling.
We hope to hear from you soon.

Yours Sincerely

....

HOMESCHOOL PICNIC

29TH NOVEMBER 1992

EVERYBODY WARMLY WELCOMED

END OF YEAR PICNIC & BOOK SWAP, TRADE & BUY RESOURCE DAY

CONTACT PERSON : Dodie Conway 639 4858 Ann Gippel 7073437

TIME: 11 a.m. - 6 p.m. or anytime in between.

VENUE: The venue of this event has been changed to Kellyville Sport, Recreation Center & Park, Memorial Drive Kellyville.

What is planned:

* A large sports and picnic day, with a BBQ available.
* A huge range of new Homeschooling books available to see.
* A collection of new, as new and old school type, fiction and non-fiction homeschooling and educational resources.
* Shared afternoon tea, in an indoor, upstairs room. (Tea and coffee making facilities and a large fridge available).

Who and what to bring:

* Any new or used **books or educational materials** you wish to sell, swap or trade.
* The whole family- grandparents are most welcome,
* Sports equipment, balls, comfortable clothes, sandshoes, etc.
* Your lunch and something to sit on.
* A small plate to share at afternoon tea 4 p.m.- 6 p.m.

Homeschooling Seminars

NEWCASTLE SEPT 27th

Hillview Hall, Morrisset. Organised by Carolyn Arthur phone 049 665 098 for details.

SYDNEY REGION Sun OCT 25th

Time: 1 p.m. - 5 p.m.

Venue: Kellyville Sport, Recreation Center Hall Memorial Drive Kellyville.

Topic: Why, how and what to use for homeschooling. What should I read ? Resources, information, networking. Discussion about structured and unstructured programs, how do I make up a program, diary ? How do I evaluate what my child is learning ?

Cost $20 per family - grandparents and husbands warmly welcomed. The cost is $15 per family for anyone who has already attended one of my seminars. Childminding available and afternoon tea supplied.

R.S.V.P. Please remember to tell us you are coming **before 22 nd October,** the seminar will not proceed if enough people are not interested or available for that date. Ring 629 3727 for more details.

ALL SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR THE 1993 AUSTRALIAN HOMESCHOOL JOURNAL ARE NOW DUE

SUBSCRIPTION: $30 for 6 issues

If you send the subscription, name & address of a new subscriber with your own subscription you need only send
$25 for your 6 issues !!

Send your cheque or money order to

Homeschoolers Australia pty ltd
P.O. BOX 420
KELLYVILLE 2153

PERTH & BUNBURY W.A. NOVEMBER 15th-22nd

Contact persons
Perth Sue Warner 09 294 4553
Bunbury Karen Lawtie 097 311 817

Topics: Legalities, past experiences, dealing with administrators, homeschooling philosophies and freedoms. What can I read about homeschooling ? Resources information & the power and protections of networking. Everyone warmly welcomed.

SYDNEY REGION Sunday JANUARY 24th

Time: 1 p.m. - 5 p.m.

Venue: Kellyville Sport, Recreation Center Hall Memorial Drive Kellyville.

Topic: Why, how and what to use for homeschooling. What should I read ? Resources, information, networking. Discussion about structured and unstructured programs, how do I make up a program, diary ? How do I evaluate what my child is learning ? What about socialization?

Cost $20 per family - grandparents and husbands warmly welcomed. The cost is $15 per family for anyone who has already attended one of my seminars. Childminding available and afternoon tea supplied.

R.S.V.P. Please remember to tell us you are coming before 23rdJanuary, the seminar will not proceed if enough people are not interested or available for that date.Ring 629 3727 for more details.

Happy Homeschooling

Australian Homeschool Journal

ISSUE 36

Editor: JoAnne Beirne

Subscription to this journal is $30 for 6 issues
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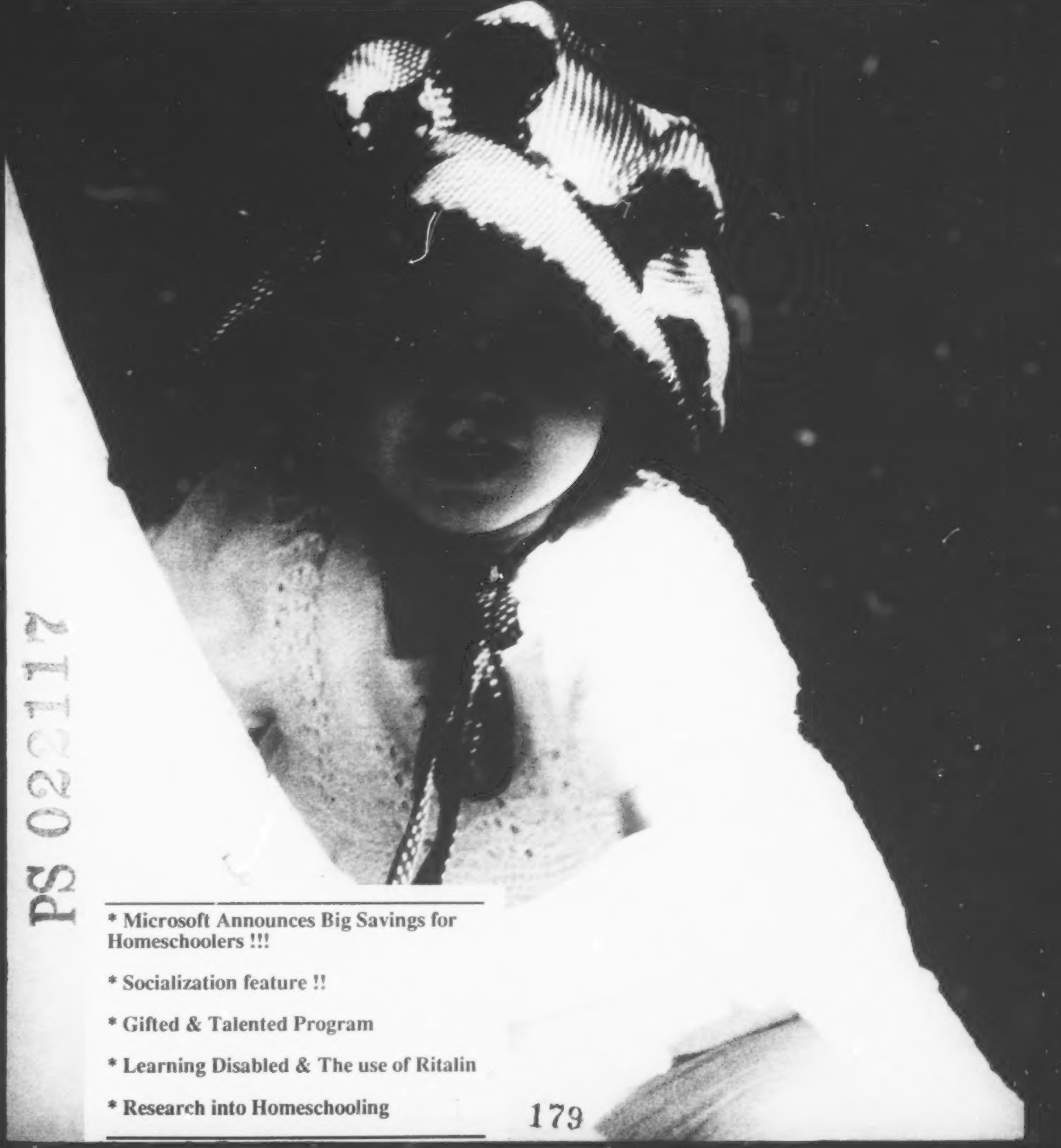

- Microsoft Announces Big Savings for Homeschoolers !!!
- Socialization feature !!
- Gifted & Talented Program
- Learning Disabled & The use of Ritalin
- Research into Homeschooling

PS 022117

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Please consider sending us your subscription for the six editions of the 1993 Australian Homeschool Journal 40 pages of information at only $30 for one years subscription !!!

Great feature on socialization by homeschooling children themselves from G.W.S. 88

See pages 23-27

Don't forget to register with Q Stores for your catalogue !

See pages 38-39 for the registration form.

Great savings for Home Educators from Apple Computers & Microsoft!

See pages 28-29

GETTING STARTED WITH HOMESCHOOLING

A 44 page information booklet for those thinking about homeschooling has recently been UPDATED & reprinted.

If you have a friend or relative who wants to know the answers to these pertinent homeschooling questions
***WHY *HOW *HIGH SCHOOL *TERTIARY * SOCIALIZATION**
***ACCOUNTABILITY *LEGAL ISSUES** & the answers to 30 or 40 other commonly asked questions & concerns

Please tell them to send $15 for our information package to
Homeschoolers Australia pty ltd.
P.O. Box 420
Kellyville 2153 Ph: 02 629 3727

News & Information

The John Holt Book and Music Store Catalogue HAS ARRIVED !

Q STORES for N.S.W. Homeschoolers
Please, please, please if you are a N.S.W. homeschooler read the Q Stores information in this issue and if you are interested send your request for registration with Q Stores in. If you have received a letter from Ms. Rathna Kumar, please ignore it as it was a mistake and you will soon receive your catalogue.

THE AUSTRALIAN HOMESCHOOL JOURNAL - SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE !!!
Thank you to all those people who have already resubscribed. We hope you will decide to renew your subscription to our journal which falls due this issue. For $30 you get 6 issues of what we believe is very useful resource, legal and practical information about homeschooling, programming, socialisation, higher education, research and much more. Anyone wishing to subscribe to the 6 issues of the journal in 1993 is requested to send a cheque for $30 to Homeschoolers Australia P.O. BOX 420 Kellyville 2153.

A BONUS FOR OLD SUBSCRIBERS
IF YOU GET A FRIEND TO SUBSCRIBE TO THE JOURNAL WHO HAS NEVER SUBSCRIBED BEFORE YOU NEED ONLY SEND $25 for your own yearly subscription but both subscriptions and cheques will need to be posted in the same envelope.

SUBSCRIBE TO THE A.H.J. FOR YOUR LOCAL LIBRARY
Jackie Perriam rang through the week and said she would like to subscribe to the journal for her local library - Castle Hill in doing her "bit" for homeschooling. Two other families are subscribing for their mother and mother-in-law so that they know what's going on.

YOU CAN SPREAD THE WORD !!
In 1993, I will be canvassing all libraries with a view to encouraging them to stock at least some books on home education in each library around the State You can really help this process by speaking to your local librarian and informing her that you are interested in homeschooling. Anyone who wishes us to send a copy of the John Holt Book and Music Store Catalogue to their librarian should drop us a note with the name and address and we will follow this up immediately.

THE UPDATED APPLE PRICE LIST FOR HOME EDUCATORS IS ON PAGE 29

MICROSOFT-grants homeschoolers THE EDUCATORS DISCOUNT (Thanks Ross Bullôt of Kurrawood Computers for negotiating this on our behalf) SEE page 29 for details!! EXAMPLE Word 5.0 recommended retail price is $595 now only $185 if you are a registered homeschooler and register through Homeschoolers Australia and Kurrawood Computers.

COMPUTER WORKSHOP- 28TH MARCH 1993

We are planning a computer workshop. Bill Chalker is going to help me coordinate it. His phone is 02 4844680, mine is 02 629 3727. It will be homeschooler generated and conducted but I would envisage at least some of the following happening.

* Families bring their own computers and software.

* A few hours for parents and children who are experienced with computers. In this time they could share with other experienced users the software they most enjoy, the skills they have discovered, the information they have found most useful, programming and other tips.

* The second half of the day would provide an opportunity for children and parents who have never used computers or would like to find out more detailed first hand information about them. They could ask questions and use the machines, under supervision, of the more experienced users.

* I will attempt to coordinate it so there is a diverse range of software available from Physics & Calculus through Maths Blaster, Sim City and Sim Ant to word processing programs, the Dycam camera which transfers pictures straight on to a computer (just for inspiration), chemistry , flight simulators, etc.

* We hope to set up a homeschoolers users network, to distribute useful computer information & perhaps a newsletter.

Suggestions are welcomed - on paper initially and to P.O. Box 420, Kellyville, 2153. If you are interested in attending the workshop please write and tell us, listing which part of the workshop applies to you, also your name, age (of child), type of computer & any expertise, software you would wish to share and anything else you think relevant.

Resources

YOUNG HOMESCHOOLER AT T.A.F.E.
Celicia Giandomenico has written to say that her daughter Donna (10) has been accepted, after interview, into their local TAFE college to do a computer course in 1993. All the normal costs apply of course but it is a piece of knowledge others might like to use.

FAX MATH
Have you ever felt like giving up with Maths because no-one can help you and group tuition is a waste of money and private tuition is too expensive ? - Well...........

This is the introductory blurb for a service offered by Peter Ooi (B.Sc, Dip. Ed. who is a senior Maths/Computing Teacher with twenty years of experience at all levels and currently teaching at South Sydney High School.

If you fax your Maths problems to him Peter will solve them for you at a cost of $1 per problem with a minimum of $20 per subscription. For more details ring 02 666 3331 or fax 02 316 4996 and you will be faxed an application form.

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING SERVICE
If you ask them you can be included on their mailing list G.P.O. Box 84 Canberra. They will send you a catalogue of which features a range of interesting books, reports and results of studies.

TANDY - SCIENCE KITS
Mary Bath kindly reminded me of the great variety of interesting science kits, that are relatively inexpensive and are available in Tandy Stores . Included are general science and physics kits, electric circuits, etc.

EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTRES
Education Resource Centers are situated around NSW. They regularly have open days to display a wide range of curriculum and other educational materials. Contact your local E.R.C. for details and use this useful resource.

APPLE
If you use an Apple computer you may want to attend the MacWorld Expo at Darling Harbour in November. The range of products and services is usually stunning.

GIFTED AND TALENTED CATALOGUE
Each year Hawker Brownlow publishes a very detiled list of books and other resources available for use with gifted and talented children . If you would like a copy ring their Sydney Office on 02 634 6969 or their Melbourne Office on 03 555 1344. Their toll free number is 008 33 4603.

KELLYVILLE HOMESCHOOL GATHERINGS & SPORTS DAYS in 1993

AIM: To network, provide a venue, support, encouragement and infomation for those homeschooling or those thinking about it.
VENUE: Kellyville Sports and Recreation Center, Memorial Drive Kellyville 10 a.m.- 2 p.m Monday 23rd November 1992 Facilitated by Greg & Jo-Anne Beirne. Contact person for more information - Dodie Conway 639 4858

* Monday November 23rd
* Tuesday February 16th
* Tuesday March 16th
* Monday April 19th
* Tuesday May 18th

IF YOU ARE GOING TO BE IN SYDNEY PLEASE COME AND SEE US !!!

PHOTOGRAPHER ANSEL ADAMS was a fidgety child who had difficulty adjusting to school. His father decided to teach him at home, and the next years were fruitful. Learning experiences were tapped into the young boy's intrinsic interests, and ranged from playing the piano to visiting an exposition. Several years later, after he had become internationally known for his creative photography, Adams paid tribute to the courage of a father who was willing to take risks, to listen to that "different drummer" unique to each child. In his autobiography, Adams wrote:

"I am certain he established the positive direction of my life that otherwise, given my native hyperactivity, could have been confused and catastrophic. I trace who I am and the direction of my development to those years of growing up in our house on the dunes, propelled especially by an internal spark tenderly kept alive and glowing by my father."

- Teresa Amabile, *Growing Up Creative*

SEMINARS

PERTH 15TH & 16TH NOVEMBER 1992

Contact person Sue Warner 09 294 4553

Topics: Legalities, past experiences, dealing with administrators, homeschooling philosophies and freedoms. What can I read about homeschooling? Resources information, the power and protection of networking. Books from Raymond & Dorothy Moore & The John Holt Book and Music Store on display. Everyone warmly welcomed.

BUNBURY 22ND NOVEMBER 1992

Contact person Karen Lawtie 097 311 817

Topics: Legalities, past experiences, dealing with administrators, homeschooling philosophies and freedoms. What can I read about homeschooling? Resources information, the power and protection of networking. Everyone warmly welcomed.

SYDNEY JANUARY 24TH 1993

Time: 1 p.m. - 5 p.m.

Venue: Kellyville Sport, Recreation Centre Hall Memorial Drive Kellyville.

Topic: Why, how and what to use for homeschooling. What should I read ? Resources, information, networking. Discussion about structured and unstructured programs, how do I make up a program, diary ? How do I evaluate what my child is learning ? What about socialization? Books from Raymond & Dorothy Moore & The John Holt Book and Music Store on display.

Cost $20 per family - grandparents and husbands warmly welcomed. The cost is $15 per family for anyone who has already attended one of my seminars. Childminding available and afternoon tea supplied.

R.S.V.P. Please remember to tell us you are coming before 23rd January. The seminar will not proceed if enough people are not interested or available for that date. Ring 02 629 3727 for more details or to leave your name and phone number if you wish to attend.

CANBERRA THURSDAY 28TH JANUARY 1993

Contact Claire Powell 06 251 6663 Jo Boehm 06 248 5962

Topic: Why, how and what to use for homeschooling. Natural learning, resources information, networking, programs, how do I make up a program, diary ? How do I evaluate what my child is learning ? What about socialization? etc. Books from Raymond & Dorothy Moore & The John Holt Book and Music Store will be on display.

DON'T FORGET THE HOMESCHOOL PICNIC !

29th NOVEMBER '92

Featuring: (thanks to Ann Gippel)
EARTH BALL, PARACHUTE AND GETTAS, SACK & THREE LEGGED RACES, ETC.

*** PICNIC & BOOK SWAP, TRADE & BUY RESOURCE DAY**

CONTACT PERSON : Dodie Conway 02 639 4858 Ann Gippel 02 707 3437

TIME: 11 a.m. - 6 p.m. or anytime in between.

VENUE: The venue for this event has been changed to Kellyville Sport, Recreation Centre & Park, Memorial Drive Kellyville.

What is planned:

* A large sports and picnic day, with a BBQ available.* A large range of new homeschooling books available to see.* A collection of new, as new and old school type, fiction and non-fiction homeschooling and educational resources. * Shared afternoon tea, in an indoor, upstairs room. (Tea and coffee making facilities and a large fridge available).

Who and what to bring:

* Any new or used books or educational materials you wish to sell or trade. * The whole family- grandparents are most welcome. * Sports equipment, balls, comfortable clothes, sandshoes, suncream etc.* Your lunch and something to sit on.* A small plate to share at afternoon tea 4 p.m.- 6 p.m.

EVERYBODY WARMLY WELCOMED

ABC
TV

STUDYING AT UNIVERSITY ON ABC TV:
OPEN LEARNING

WHAT IS TV OPEN LEARNING?

TV Open Learning is a pilot project offering seven different first-year university courses using broadcasts on ABC Television. There are no educational or age entry requirements and no prerequisites for study. The television programs introduce and illustrate key concepts of each unit, and are supported by textbooks and special study packages prepared by the universities involved. All units can be studied from anywhere in Australia.

Five universities are currently involved with TV Open Learning: Monash (the project manager), New England - Armidale, South Australia, Deakin and Griffith.

WHEN DO I WATCH?

Five units are currently being broadcast on ABC TV during study period 3, which finishes at the end of November:

Mondays at 7.30 am:	**Australian Environmental Studies: The Unique Continent**
Tuesdays at 7.30 am:	**Anthropology: Faces of Culture**
Wednesdays at 7.30 am:	**Australian Studies: Images of Australia**
Thursdays at 7.30 am:	**Statistics: Against All Odds**
Fridays at 7.30 am:	**French: French in Action**

Each program is repeated on the Saturday of the following week as follows:

Australian Environmental Studies:	9.00 am
Anthropology:	9.30 am
Australian Studies:	10.00 am
Statistics:	10.30 am
French:	11.00 am

A new study period commences on Monday November 30th, with the following units:

Australian Environmental Studies: The Unique Continent will recommence on Monday November 30th at 7.30 am.
Religion Studies: The Long Search commences on Tuesday December 1st at 7.00 am, with hour-long programs (not repeated on Saturdays; all others are).
Marketing: Theory and Practice commences on Wednesday December 2nd at 7.30 am.
Statistics: Against All Odds continues with new programming on Thursdays at 7.30 am.
French: French in Action continues with new programming on Fridays at 7.30 am.

New enrolments can be accepted for Australian Environmental Studies, Religion and Marketing until mid-December.

HOW DO I OBTAIN MORE INFORMATION OR ENROL?

Obtain a copy of the Open Learning **Prospectus** by writing to: TV Open Learning, GPO Box 1188, Melbourne VIC 3001. Or simply leave your name and address with us at the Open Learning stand today.

How not to learn Physics

Richard Feynman (Nobel prize winning physicist)

From the book "Surely You're Joking Mr Feynman !"

I have always thought that this is a magnificent piece about the difference between "learning to pass exams" and "learning to understand". Homeschooling mothers are often made to feel inadequate about the possibility that they can teach subjects such as physics and chemistry. I truly believe, however, that homeschoolers' general inclination to letting children ask questions and find real answers will hold their students in good stead for anything they need to find out in the future.

I also felt it was essential to publish this when a computer expert I know recently told me that he was at a function where the head of technology development of a large scientific company in Australia asked him the most basic questions about the computers that he had already purchased for his department. He told the computer expert that "he didn't want to appear stupid by asking those people under him, who worked for him, what he didn't know." As if being higher up the salary ladder must, by necessity, must make one more knowledgeable (or look so) in every area than those down the salary or experience ladder.

In regard to education in Brazil, I had a very interesting experience. I was teaching a group of students who would ultimately become teachers, since at that time there were not many opportunities in Brazil for a highly trained person in science. These students had already had many courses, and this was to be their most advanced course in electricity and magnetism—Maxwell's equations, and so on. The university was located in various office buildings throughout the city, and the course I taught met in a building which overlooked the bay.

I discovered a very strange phenomenon: I could ask a question, which the students would answer immediately. But the next time I would ask the question—the same subject, and the same question, as far as I could tell—they couldn't answer it at all! For instance, one time I was talking about polarized light, and I gave them all some strips of polaroid. Polaroid passes only light whose electric vector is in a certain direction, so I explained how you could tell which way the light is polarized from whether the polaroid is dark or light. We first took two strips of polaroid and rotated them until they let the most light through. From doing that we could tell that the two strips were now admitting light polarized in the same direction—what passed through one piece of polaroid could also pass through the other. But then I asked them how one could tell the absolute direction of polarization, for a single piece of polaroid. They hadn't any idea. I knew this took a certain amount of ingenuity, so I gave them a hint: "Look at the light reflected from the bay outside." Nobody said anything. Then I said, "Have you ever heard of Brewster's Angle?" "Yes, sir! Brewster's Angle is the angle at which light reflected from a medium with an index of refraction is completely polarized." "And which way is the light polarized when it's reflected?" "The light is polarized perpendicular to the plane of reflection sir." Even now, I have to think about it; they knew it cold! They even knew the tangent of the angle equals the index! I said, "Well?" Still nothing. They had just told me that light reflected from a medium with an index, such as the bay outside, was polarized; they had even told me which way it was polarized. I said, "Look at the bay outside, through the polaroid. Now turn the polaroid." "Ooh, it's polarized!" they said.

After a lot of investigation, I finally figured out that the students had memorized everything, but they didn't know what anything meant. When they heard "light that is reflected from a medium with an index," they didn't know that it meant a material such as water. They didn't know that the "direction of the light" is the direction in which you see something when you're looking at it, and so on. Everything was entirely memorized, yet nothing had been translated into meaningful words. So if I asked, "What is Brewster's Angle?" I'm going into the computer with the right keywords. But if I say, "Look at the water," nothing happens—they don't have anything under "Look at the water"! Later I attended a lecture at the engineering school. The lecture went like this, translated into English: "Two bodies. . . are considered equivalent. . . if equal torques. . . will produce. . . equal acceleration. Two bodies, are considered equivalent, if equal torques, will produce equal acceleration." The students were all sitting there taking dictation, and when the professor repeated the sentence, they checked it to make sure they wrote it down all right. Then they wrote down the next sentence, and on and on. I was the only one who knew the professor was talking about objects with the same moment of inertia, and it was hard to figure out. I didn't see how they were going to learn anything from that. Here he was talking about moments of inertia, but there was no discussion about how hard it is to push a door open when you put heavy weights on the outside, compared to when you put them near the hinge, nothing!

After the lecture, I talked to a student: "You take all those notes—what do you do with them?" "Oh, we study them," he says. "We'll have an exam."What will the exam be like?" "Very easy. I can tell you now one of the questions". He looks at his notebook and says, "When are two bodies equivalent?' And the answer is, 'Two bodies are considered equivalent if equal torques will produce equal acceleration.'" So, you see, they could pass the examinations, and "learn" all this stuff, and not know anything at all, except what they had memorized.

Then I went to an entrance exam for students coming into the engineering school. It was an oral exam, and I was allowed to listen to it. One of the students was absolutely super: He answered everything nifty! The examiners asked him what diamagnetism was, and he answered it perfectly. Then they asked, "When light comes at an angle through a sheet of material with a certain thickness, and a certain index N, what happens to the light?" "It comes out parallel to itself, sir—displaced." "And how much is it displaced?" "I don't know, sir, but I can figure it out." So he figured it out. He was very good. But I had, by this time, my suspicions. After the exam I went up to this bright young man, and explained to him that I was from the United States, and that I wanted to ask him some questions that would not affect the result of his examination in any way. The first question I ask is, "Can you give me some example of a diamagnetic substance?" "No". Then I asked, "If this book was made of glass, and I was looking at something on the table through it, what would happen to the image if I tilted the glass?" "It would be deflected, sir, by twice the angle that you've turned the book." I said, "You haven't got it mixed up with a mirror, have you? "No, sir!" He had just told me in the examination that the light would be displaced, parallel to itself, and therefore the image would move over to one side, but would not be turned by any angle. He had even figured out how much it would be displaced, but he didn't realize that a piece of glass is a material with an index, and that his calculation had applied to my question.

I taught a course at the engineering school on mathematical methods in physics, in which I tried to show how to solve problems by trial and error. It's something that people don't usually learn, so I began with some simple examples of arithmetic to illustrate the method. I was surprised that only about eight out of the eighty or so students turned in the first assignment. So I gave a strong lecture about having to actually try it, not just sit back and watch me do it. After the lecture some students came up to me in a little delegation, and told me that I didn't understand the backgrounds that they have, that they can study without doing the problems, that they have already learned arithmetic, and that this stuff was beneath them.

So I kept going with the class, and no matter how complicated or obviously advanced the work was becoming, they were never handing anything in. Of course I realized what it was: They couldn't do it! One other thing I could never get them to do was to ask questions. Finally, a student explained it to me: "If I ask you a question during the lecture, afterwards everybody will be telling me, 'What are you wasting our time for in the class? We're trying to learn something, and you're stopping him by asking a question'." It was a kind of one-upmanship, where nobody knows what's going on, and they'd put the other one down as if they did know. They all fake that they know, and if one student admits for a moment that something is confusing by asking a question, the others take a high-handed attitude, acting as if it's not confusing at all, telling him that he's wasting their time.

I explained how useful it was to work together, to discuss the questions, to talk it over, but they wouldn't do that either, because they would be losing face if they had to ask someone else. It was pitiful! All the work they did, intelligent people, but they got themselves into this funny state of mind, this strange kind of self-propagating "education" which is meaningless, utterly meaningless! At the end of the academic year, the students asked me to give a talk about my experiences of teaching in Brazil. At the talk there would be not only students, but professers and government officials, so I made them promise that I could say whatever I wanted. They said, "Sure. Of course. It's a free country!"

So I came in, carrying the elementary physics textbook that they used in the first year of college. They thought this book was especially good because it had different kinds of typeface—bold black for the most important things to remember, lighter for less important things, and so on. Right away somebody said, "You're not going to say anything bad about the textbook, are you? The man who wrote it is here, and everybody thinks it's a good textbook." "You promised I could say whatever I wanted."The lecture hall was full. I started out by defining science as an understanding of the behavior of nature. Then I asked, "What is a good reason for teaching science? Of course, no country can consider itself civilized unless . . . yak,yak, yak." They were all sitting there nodding, because I know that's the way they think. Then I said, "That, of course, is absurd, because why should we feel we have to keep up with another country? We have to do it for a good reason, a sensible reason; not just because other countries do."

Then I talked about the utility of science, and its contribution to the improvement of the human condition, and all that—I really teased them a little bit. Then I said, "The main purpose of my talk is to demonstrate to you that no science is being taught in Brazil!" I can see them stir, thinking, "What? No science? This is absolutely crazy! We have all these classes." So I told them that one of the first things to strike me when I came to Brazil was to see primary school kids in bookstores, buying physics books. There are so many kids learning physics in Brazil, beginning much earlier than kids do in the United States, that it's amazing you don't find many physicists in Brazil—why is that? So many kids are working so hard, and nothing comes of it.

Then I gave the analogy of a Greek scholar who loves the Greek language, who knows that in his own country there aren't many children studying Greek. But he comes to another country, where he is delighted to find everybody studying Greek, even the smaller kids in the primary schools. He goes to the examination of a student who is coming to get his degree in Greek, and asks him, "What were Socrates' ideas on the relationship between Truth and Beauty?" and the student can't answer. Then he asks the student,"What did Socrates say to Plato in the Third

Symposium?" the student lights up and goes, "Brrrrrrrr-up"- he tells you everything, word for word, that Socrates said, in beautiful Greek. But what Socrates was talking about in the Third Symposium was the relationship between Truth and Beauty! What this Greek scholar discovers is, the students in another country learn Greek by first learning to pronounce the letters, then the words, and then sentences and paragraphs. They can recite, word for word, what Socrates said, without realizing that those Greek words actually mean something. To the student they are all artificial sounds. Nobody has ever translated them into words the students can understand.

I said, "That's how it looks to me, when I see you teaching the kids 'science' here in Brazil." (Big blast, right?) Then I held up the elementary physics textbook they were using. "There are no experimental results mentioned anywhere in this book, except in one place where there is a ball, rolling down an inclined plane, in which it says how far the ball got after one second, two seconds, three seconds, and so on. The numbers have 'errors' in them—that is, if you look at them, you think you're looking at experimental results, because the numbers are a little above, or a little below, the theoretical values. The book even talks about having to correct the experimental errors—very fine. The trouble is, when you calculate the value of the acceleration constant from these values, you get the right answer. But a ball rolling down an inclined plane, if it is actually done, has an inertia to get it to turn, and will, if you do the experiment, produce five-sevenths of the right answer, because of the extra energy needed to go into the rotation of the ball. Therefore this single example of experimental 'results' is obtained from a fake experiment. Nobody had rolled such a ball, or they would never have gotten those results!

"I have discovered something else," I continued. "By flipping the pages at random, and putting my finger in and reading the sentences on that page, I can show you what's the matter—how it's not science, but memorizing, in every circumstance. Therefore I am brave enough to flip through the pages now, in front of this audience, to put my finger in, to read, and to show you." So I did it. *"Brrrrrrrup"* - I stuck my finger in, and I started to read: "Triboluminescence. Triboluminescence is the light emitted when crystals are crushed..." I said, "And there, have you got science? No! You have only told what a word means in terms of other words. You haven't told anything about nature- WHAT crystals produce light when you crush them, WHY they produce light. Did you see any student go home and TRY it? He can't. "But if, instead, you were to write, 'When you take a lump of sugar and crush it with a pair of pliers in the dark, you can see a bluish flash. Some other crystals do that too. Nobody knows why. The phenomenon is called "triboluminescence."' Then someone will go home and try it. Then there's an experience of nature." I used that example to show them, but it didn't make any difference where I would have put my finger in the book; it was like that everywhere. Finally, I said that I couldn't see how anyone could be educated by this self-propagating system in which people pass exams, and teach others to pass exams, but nobody knows anything. "However," I said, "I must be wrong. There were two students in my class who did very well, and one of the professors I know was educated entirely in Brazil. Thus, it must be possible for some people to work their way through the system, bad as it is."

Well, after I gave the talk, the head of the science education department got up and said, "Mr. Feynman has told us some things that are very hard for us to hear, but it appears to be that he really loves science, and is sincere in his criticism. Therefore, I think we should listen to him. I came here knowing we have some sickness in our system of education; what I have learned is that we have a cancer!—and he sat down.

That gave other people the freedom to speak out, and there was a big excitement. Everybody was getting up and making suggestions. The students got some committee together to mimeograph the lectures in advance, and they got other committees organized to do this and that. Then something happened which was totally unexpected for me. One of the students got up and said, "I'm one of the two students whom Mr. Feynman referred to at the end of his talk. I was not educated in Brazil; I was educated in Germany, and I've just come to Brazil this year." The other student who had done well in class had a similar thing to say.

And the professor I had mentioned got up and said, "I was educated here in Brazil during the war, when, fortunately, all of the professors had left the university; so I learned everything by reading alone. Therefore I was not really educated under the Brazilian system." I didn't expect that. I knew the system was bad, but 100 percent—it was terrible! Since I had gone to Brazil under a program sponsored by the United States Government, I was asked by the State Department to write a report about my experiences in Brazil, so I wrote out the essentials of the speech I had just given. I found out later through the grapevine that the reaction of somebody in the State Department was, "That shows you how dangerous it is to send somebody to Brazil who is so naive. Foolish fellow; he can only cause trouble. He didn't understand the problems." Quite the contrary! I think this person in the State Department was naive to think that because he saw a university with a list of courses and descriptions, that's what it was.

RESEARCH ON HOME SCHOOLING

M. Larry and Susan D. Kaseman 1990

Interest in doing research on home schoolers is growing, increasingly home schoolers are being asked to fill out questionnaires and participate in research studies. Our first response may be to feel flattered. After all, we know we are doing a good job and have interesting stories to tell. It is about time other people caught on and wanted to know more about us. This will give us a chance to share some of what we have learned. We are confident that research results would reveal and "prove" the strengths of home schooling and home schoolers. And maybe research would help convince our adversaries that homeschooling is an acceptable alternative and does not need state regulation. It would certainly be a useful tool to have available in court cases, legislative battles and any time we need to document the strength of home schooling. On a personal level, some of us would like to fill out a questionnaire, just to see how well we can answer the questions and "measure up."

TAKING CHARGE
THROUGH
HOME SCHOOLING
Personal and Political
Empowerment

However, before we wholeheartedly embrace research and agree to participate in studies, we need to take a much closer look at what is involved. We need to ask what effect such research will have on the home schooling movement, whether such educational research is really as scientific and accurate as it claims to be, who will benefit from such research, whether such research is necessary, what alternatives exist for gathering additional information about home schoolers and how home schoolers can respond to research requests.

WHAT EFFECT DOES EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH HAVE ON THE HOMESCHOOLING MOVEMENT?

(1) Research on home schooling strongly promotes the values and practices of conventional schooling, an effect which is very serious, especially since many of us are home schooling precisely because we object strongly to these values and practices. Among the ways research promotes these values are:

- Conventional school values and practices dominate the background, training, and experience of educational researchers. They are accustomed to using data sets, research methods, and questions that are suited to conventional schools, so they inevitably attempt to fit home schoolers into these categories. They ask, in effect, "How well do home schoolers do what conventional schools do?" rather than asking, "What do homeschoolers do that is of value?" This generally applies even if a researcher has had personal experience with home schooling, partly because participation in the conventional education system is a prerequisite to getting credentials for doing research that is recognised and accepted in most educational settings and journals. Evidence of researchers' bias is readily found in the language used, the types of questions asked and the assumptions underlying home schooling research questionnaires.

- A homeschooler filling out a questionnaire gets the clear message that she should be following conventional school values and practices. A question like, "How many hours a week do you teach reading?" clearly implies that she had better be teaching reading - and for quite a few hours a week at that. Once more the message is sent to home schoolers, "you had better make sure you are conforming with what is expected of conventional schools". Again home schools are pushed in the direction of becoming like conventional schools and away from the advantages they offer as alternatives to conventional schools.

- Research studies compare homeschoolers with conventional schoolers. The studies are clearly implying that the standard which should be held up for home schoolers, against which they should be measured, is that of conventional schools. This does not give any credit to home schoolers whose goals and values are different from those of conventional schools.

(2) Research studies weaken a grassroots movement in several ways, including these:

- Participating in research gives credence and importance to quantitative studies rather than to winning support for homeschooling by having home schoolers tell their own stories and share their experiences through presentations to groups in their communities, newspaper stories, etc. It is another example of relying on "experts" instead of empowering themselves.

- Studies can divide homeschoolers by emphasising differences among them as shown in their responses to questions and to research surveys in general.

- As a general strategy, it is better for a small minority like home schoolers to keep the opposition guessing than to reveal too much about themselves.

(3) Research could provide data and arguments that opponents of home schooling could use to support their demands for greater regulation of home schooling. For example, if a study reveals that some, or many, or most home schoolers voluntarily do something, such as use a purchased curriculum, or administer standardised tests or keep detailed records, opponents of homeschooling could argue that these are generally acceptable to homeschoolers and should be required of them. In other words, the research could be used to force these practices on home schoolers, especially if a large majority of them already seem to fit conventional school expectations.

Research quantifies and thus dehumanises people. Instead of wonderful, alive, unique individuals, our children become black marks on a score sheet; our families become numbers, part of a set.

In addition, and perhaps even more serious, once the role that research findings should play in determining home school regulation is accepted, there is no end to the regulation that can and will be required, based on research. For example, home schoolers have been reported to score as well as or better than their conventional school counterparts on standardised tests. Additional research is now showing that these tests are questionable at best and that other means of assessment (such as portfolio assessment) are needed in addition to, if not in place of, such tests. Do home schoolers want to be subjected to this additional requirement or any others? (Research studies have been used to justify and support virtually all the practices of conventional schools.)

(4) The right of a family to homeschool has a solid foundation. In agreeing to be the subject of research, home schoolers are implicitly agreeing that we need to be judged and assessed. We are thereby surrendering an important fundamental right. If we get into this game of proving what we can do by conventional standards, we are giving up one of our most important rights.

(5) Because research studies emphasise conventional school values and practices, they move home schoolers away from the cutting edge of educational alternatives and innovations and limit the contribution we could make to the understanding of how children learn and how adults can assist them.

(6) On an emotional level, when measured against what really matters, research is found wanting and can be harmful. It distorts and damages our self-image, our self-esteem and our confidence. Among other things:

- Research quantifies and thus dehumanises people. Instead of wonderful, alive, unique individuals, our children become black marks on a score sheet; our families become numbers, part of a set.

- Research is an invasion of privacy, even if anonymity is guaranteed. We have still been asked questions we might have preferred not to answer; we have still been singled out for scrutiny.

- The emotional impact of filling out a survey can be much like that of taking a standardised test. The implication is that someone, somewhere knows what we should be doing; that there are right answers, or at least better answers. The questions almost seem to say, "you should be teaching this many hours a week, you should be going on field trips, you should be participating in a support group, etc." This encourages people to figure out what they should be doing so they can report it on a survey, and they may lose sight of the effect such an action will have on their children. Research seems to render a judgment on homeschoolers; it does not encourage them to become empowered and make their own decisions.

- Research promotes conventional school values and practices (see above). This may undermine the confidence of some home schoolers who are trying to find alternatives to conventional schooling that will better serve the needs of their families.
- Questionnaires usually begin with a "guilt trip" about how important the study is and how much home schoolers' help is needed. The many home schoolers who want to do whatever they can to support the home schooling cause may be particularly vulnerable to pleas of this type and need to realise that research has serious potential problems.

ARE RESEARCH RESULTS ACCURATE ?

The history of social science research, including educational research, is filled with problems, criticisms, accusations and doubts. Space does not permit a thorough discussion, but among the most important points that pertain to home schooling research are:

- Most topics included in the social sciences cannot be studied scientifically. Home schooling cannot be quantified or measured. For example, there is no common agreement about what it means to be educated or how a researcher determines when someone is educated. To try to make their studies more "scientific," researchers sometimes choose instead variables that seem easier to measure, like how many hours a day a child spends reading. (Even this is complicated.) For example, if in an hour, one child quickly skims a book and remembers little, a second child reads uncritically and recalls many details, and a third child covers only a few pages but thinks a lot about the subject, are all three "reading" ? If a researcher studies only things that can easily be measured, like how many years the subject of research has been home schooling or the subject's age, the results are simply a collection of statistics and do not reveal much.

- Responses people give are influenced both by what the researcher asks and how she asks it. Definitions of terms are also a problem. If a researcher asks whether a homeschooler is "home schooling for political reasons," what does the researcher think she is asking, what does the home schooler mean by his answer, and how does a person reading the research results interpret the question and the answer? Sometimes researchers try to correct this problem by simply reporting that a certain number or per cent of home schoolers said they were home schooling for political reasons. But if it is not clear what this means, what is the point of doing the research?

- Subjects' realisation that they are being observed changes their behaviour. Some give answers intended to please the researcher rather than those which would be accurate or give more complete information. Others hide information or distort things. Others refuse to participate. (Researchers account for those who refuse by having what they consider enough other respondents with similar characteristics [income, education,religious background, age, sex, place of residence, etc.], but one never knows what the non-respondents really represent, which limits the accuracy of researchers' conclusions, especially when dealing with a small minority.)

- Research data by definition must be interpreted; and a researcher's experiences, beliefs, and biases influence his interpretations. This adds more uncertainty and ambiguity to the research.

- The most important parts of home schooling (the look of joy on a child's face as she discovers something, the recovered self-esteem of a child who had been labelled "learning disabled" by a conventional school) cannot be captured and recorded in quantitative or "scientific" studies. Therefore research gives a misleading picture of home schooling when it claims to show the strengths of home schooling but fails to study or report the most important ones.

- Despite these and other limitations, complications, and ambiguities, researchers present their results as facts, using numbers, graphs, charts and similar devices to give the illusion of scientific accuracy. This is at best misleading and occasionally downright dishonest.

WHO BENEFITS FROM HOMESCHOOLING RESEARCH?

Given all these problems and pitfalls, why would anyone do research on home schooling? Who benefits? Obviously, researchers and the universities and other institutions with which they work or who support and use their work benefit directly in terms of money received and increased status and prestige. Homeschooling research may be particularly in vogue now, making it easier to get grants and other support for home schooling research than for other seemingly less timely topics. But when there are more than 100,000 articles published each year (as reported in Phi Delta Kappan, Vol. 71, No. 3, Nov., 1989, p. 226), there must be intense pressure on graduate students, instructors and professors alike to find an original topic. Do home schoolers have an obligation to serve as fodder for this arm of the educational establishment?

IS HOME SCHOOLING RESEARCH NECESSARY ?

No. Parents have the right to home school their children, and there is no substantial evidence that home schoolers are a problem.

Note, for example, that essentially all the published stories about home schoolers are positive. (How many cover stories have appeared: "Home Schooling: The New Menace to Our Young?")

In addition, research is not effective. No matter how positive the results, research will not stop or significantly diminish opposition to home schooling. People who are already open-minded about the home school or tending to support it may say, "Oh, okay, since the studies show home schoolers do so well by conventional school standards, I'll support you." But people tend to hear what they want to hear, and positive research results are highly unlikely to change home schooling policies. Determined opponents of home schooling will argue, "the report shows that all the home schoolers who responded to the survey are doing a good job. But what inadequate home schooler would fill out such a survey honestly? Anyway, we still need regulation to prevent someone from doing a bad job in the future."

Given the potential problems outlined above, and the fact that there are better ways (see next question) of gathering information about home schooling, if such information is really needed, does it make sense for home schoolers to risk participating in studies which are unnecessary and ineffective?

Does it make sense to participate in a misleading and potentially harmful research study just so it will be a little bit less misleading and harmful?

ALTERNATIVES TO RESEARCH

There may be times when it is handy to cite research studies. In addition, some allies and potential supporters of homeschooling claim that more needs to be known about homeschooling. (The authors do not agree, but nevertheless, that is how some people feel.) Is there an alternative to research, any other way to gather information that could be used to support homeschooling?

Case studies could be used. Home schoolers who are willing to share their experiences could do so, and these could be presented as just what they are--first person accounts of a particular experience. Few generalisations could be drawn from these reports, but as was shown above, accurate generalisations cannot be drawn from research data either. At least with case studies one would have a view of what home schooling is like for a few families. And some of the stories home schoolers have to tell are outstanding. Case studies are limited, too, but they are more honest about their limitations, and at least they come closer to conveying the uniqueness and value of an individual human life than a research study can.

Home schoolers like to talk about the exciting experiences they have had, discoveries they have made, things they have accomplished. Some feel they should participate in research so they can tell their story and help other home schoolers or potential home schoolers. This is an understandable and commendable reaction. However, for reasons given above, these people would probably contribute more to the cause of home schooling and have a more satisfying experience if they were willing to speak to groups about home schooling, testify at legislative hearings, be featured in a local newspaper story, write an article about their experiences, etc.

Rational, logical, legal, constitutional, moral, and practical arguments can be given to support home schooling. (See pp. 219-240 Taking Charge Through Homeschooling for examples.) It is much better for home schoolers to provide such arguments, plus case studies, than to give in to researchers' demands and participate in studies to show that home schooling is acceptable.

RESPONDING TO RESEARCH REQUESTS

A home schooler who receives a request for information for a research study has several options. If her honest response is to want to throw it in the trash, unread, she can do that and rest assured that she has not damaged the home schooling movement's chances for success--in fact, she may have made a positive contribution. Or she can read it and decide what to do on the basis of an honest assessment of her reaction. If she agrees with the values and the approach of the researcher and wants to support them even at the risk of dividing or weakening the home schooling movement, she can send in the questionnaire. If her response is to feel that the questionnaire is objectionable and an invasion of privacy (even if she has been assured anonymity), she can refuse to fill it out. Or she can refuse to respond to the questions but send the researcher a letter explaining her objections, concerns, and reasons for refusing.

It can be argued that if home schoolers who refuse to adopt conventional school values refuse to respond to research requests, research data will be weighted even more heavily in favour of more conventional home schoolers and therefore be even more misleading. This is logically accurate. However, the problems and distortions of social science research would not be corrected even if every home schooler participated in a given study. Does it make sense to participate in a misleading and potentially harmful research study just so it will be a little bit less misleading and harmful?

*This excerpt is from the highly recommended book - **Taking Charge through Homeschooling: Personal & Political Empowerment by Larry & Susan Kaseman** (Koshknong Press)*

Where to look for homeschooling resources

1. Standard school type textbooks- Dymocks, Angus & Robertson, Dominies, Ashton Scholastic etc. Most good bookshops sell "graded" textbooks in every subject area and in a huge variety - I suggest that parents take an excursion themselves to one of these bookshops and just take two or three hours to browse through the amazing range.

2. Libraries - everything from building the ultimate bomb to finding out how worms eat your garbage.

3. Public institutions - in every city every museum, park, gallery, public library and most public utilities run information days, exhibitions, lectures, information groups and courses and provide a wide range of resource materials.

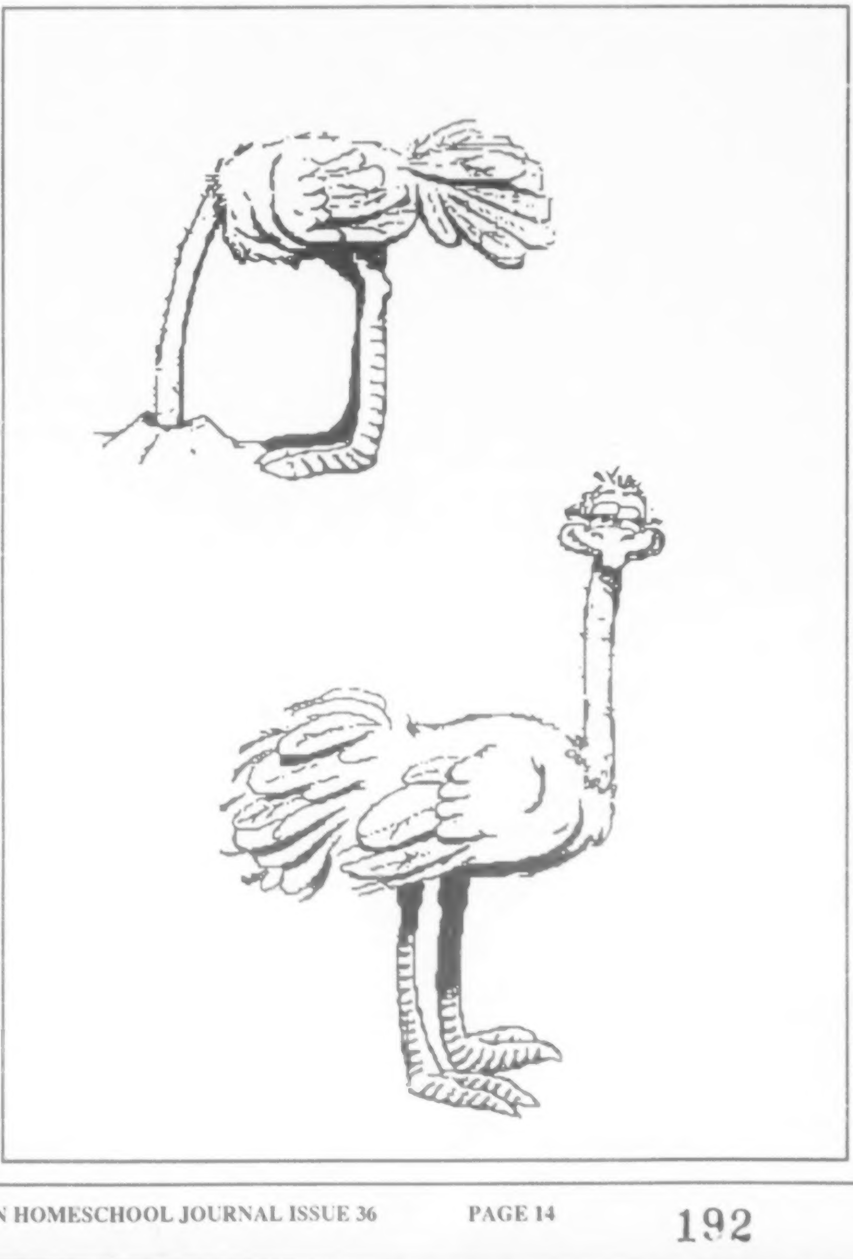
4. Your local Education Government Department or Resource Centre has much "school-type" material available for sale.

5. Your Telephone Book is a mine of information.
(a) Companies- All large and many small companies put out information that describes their activties and services they provide.
(b) Teachers, tutors, mentors of every sort are listed.
(c) Groups for sport and leisure from athletics through kayaking to skiing and yachting. Others from craft and woodwork to Rotary and Greenpeace.

6. People - especially friends and family, are great educational resources and homeschoolers have found that their community is alive with older citizens who are anxious and happy to share their skills and knowledge with enthusiastic and respectful children.

7. The Mass Media - radio & T.V. can be extremely useful educational resources especially the public broadcaster. Use of videos and audio cassettes to record relevant material for later use is a neat way to bring the experts with access to the best equipment right into your living room.

8. Sales - garage sales, opportunity shops, libraries all provide opportunities to access a wide range of educational resources.



THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Challenge Program

FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS

21-22 January, 1993

The IPACE Institute
The University of New South Wales
PO Box 1, Kensington, NSW, 2033
Phone: (02) 697 3175 Fax: (02) 662 6983

The Challenge Program is proudly sponsored by McDonalds Australia

The Program

The Summer Challenge Program is for gifted and talented High School students in Years 7 – 10. The program, formerly known as the Scientia Challenge Program, features a variety of workshops from a range of disciplines and will be presented by academics from the University of New South Wales who are experts in their field.

The Challenge Program offers eleven two-day workshops. You may choose one from the following:

- ✓ **An Issue in Criminal Law**
- ✓ **Australian Comedy: Do we play it safe?**
- ✓ **Better Cities for Tomorrow**
- ✓ **Chaos, Fractals and all that!**
- ✓ **Creativity Enhancement: Towards a Digital Darkroom**
- ✓ **Enter the World of the Chemist, Strand 1 and Strand 2 (advanced)**
- ✓ **Mind, Body and the Human View of the Universe**
- ✓ **Oceanography: The Movement of the Seas**
- ✓ **Psychology: Brain and Behaviour**
- ✓ **Thinking Like a Lawyer**

The Challenge Program is designed for academically gifted students and the level of work will be both rigorous and challenging. As a guide to the degree of difficulty, the level of work will be set at the equivalent of that attempted in Years 10 – 12 rather than Years 7 – 10. The workshops are not intended as vocational training but are purely for stimulation.

Cost

The cost for this two-day program is $200. Lunches, morning and afternoon teas will be provided. The $200 covers lecturer fees, as well as venue, equipment and associated costs. Each workshop will run with a minimum of 15 and a maximum of 20 participants.

Sponsorship

Full and half sponsorships to attend The Challenge Program have been made possible due to the generous assistance of McDonalds Australia. Sponsorship places are not allocated on academic merit but on the basis of financial hardship or geographic isolation.

To apply for sponsorship to attend the Program please include a letter outlining reasons for applying and submit this along with your application form.

If you require further information about sponsorships contact:

> ***Debra Farrelly, Co-ordinator of The Challenge Program, The IPACE Institute, The University of New South Wales, (02) 697 3055 between 8.15am and 12.00 noon weekdays.***

Venues

The workshops will be held at various venues on the Kensington campus of The University of New South Wales, with the exception of *Creativity Enhancement: Towards a Digital Darkroom,* which will commence at Kensington on the first day and then move to the University's College of Fine Arts at Paddington.

All students will enrol from 8.30 am on 21 January at the Sir John Clancy Auditorium. The Official Opening of The Challenge Program will commence at 9.00 am for students and parents.

Public Seminar

Dr Miraca Gross will conduct a Public Seminar after the Official Opening for parents of students attending the Challenge Program. The seminar will be entitled ***Accelerated Progression: Academic and Social Effects for Gifted Students.***

Dr Miraca Gross is the Senior Lecturer in Gifted Education at the University of New South Wales. Dr Gross has 22 years experience as a classroom teacher and school administrator, including 12 years as a specialist teacher of the gifted and talented children in state schools. She holds M.Ed. and Ph.D. degrees in gifted education and since 1987 has won four international research awards in the education and psychology of gifted students. She is recognised as a leading authority on the social and emotional development of gifted and talented children.

The seminar will run from 9.30 am until 11.00 am. Morning tea will be provided.

What does evaluation of our children's learning mean, and how do we do it ?

Anna Adams & Jo-Anne Beirne

Most homeschooling parents have at one time or another been asked, or asked themselves, the questions "How are the children going academically? Are they really learning anything? How do you know you are teaching effectively? Have they been tested lately?"

While teachers, psychologists, social workers and counsellors often feel that standardised and psychological testing is a good measure of learning achievement, most homeschooling families reject formal testing for their children, on the grounds of irrelevance; unnecessary stress and unreliability. But homeschooling parents have given a lot of thought to evaluation and realise there are many other options and opportunities for meaningful evaluation of their children's learning.

MEASURING OUR OWN PROGRESS

The reality is that all people are evaluating constantly. We look at what we are doing, compare it to past performances, what others are doing, what we had hoped to do. We do it when we are driving, cooking, playing, working. It is part of the living-learning process. As we evaluate, we are monitoring the process and our part in it.

Children do this sort of evaluation all the time if you think about it. "Look, Mum, now I can climb to the top of the tree" or "Look now, I have read this whole book and I know all the words". If you are listening to your children, you will notice how often they share their personal evaluations with you. "Watch me do this,....make this; Listen to me sing this,.. read this,.. how can I do this better, I don't think it's good enough?" We are all alert for evidence of our own progress and ways to improve what we are doing. How well did I do? What else could I have done to maximise and utilize my resources? Listing, in a diary or in some other way, their achievements as they see them and as you observe them, is a very good way to evaluate how much they have learnt in many different areas.

MEASURING OURSELVES COMPARED TO OUR PEERS

Of all the methods of evaluation, the one most familiar to those of us who attended school is ranking and comparison with our peers - it infiltrates almost every area of life. Schools do it, sports do it, even professions do it. Familiarity with competition and comparative ranking has meant we often regard it as necessary and even desirable. It is a common belief that comparision and ranking stimulate people to do their best. The most seductive aspect of evaluation through competition is that it appears so easy and objective - "you do well if you win and poorly if you lose". It relies on tangible, external verdicts - a trophy, an award, a good grade, etc, winning is the baseline of whether your performance was alright.

While we may be used to this system of grading, testing and ranking it is a poor way to evaluate an individual's learning. Firstly because so many variables can affect individual performance, Was the test well designed ? Was the material presented in a way that the student could understand before the test? Was the student ill the night before the test ? Is the student coping with the loss of their grandparent ? Do the other children in the class actually understand the material ? Results on a test whether bad or good really only give us information about our performance compared to a group of others on one day, about one particular topic. They tell us nothing for example about the development of logical thinking processes, the depth of understanding and reading undertaken in other relevant subject areas, the knowledge the child brings to the test or in fact the possibilities for expanding our learning horizons.

Alfie Kohn (1986) has articulated a distinction between "competition", which leads to an unhealthy evaluation of performance and "co-operative conflict" which leads to a healthy appraisal of performance. Kohn's study of competition and its effects psychologically, emotionally and socially, presents a very convincing argument against the use of any competitive evaluation, especially academically or recreationally.

MEASURING PROGRESS USING CO-OPERATION

Without competition is there still room to measure ourselves against our peers? Yes. There is much stimulation and motivation in challenging ourselves with our siblings and/or our peers without having to compare, rank or win. Becoming engaged with our peers in any skill improves our performance and enhances our enjoyment. The many different approaches people have to learning a new skill expand our own horizons, taking us in new directions and presenting us with new challenges that sharpen and improve our learning. We can get better, faster, higher WITH other people, without having to defeat or diminish them. This is what most homeschooling families do well anyway, function as a co-operative, non-competitive team.

Evaluation, through the co-operative contribution of participants may seem more difficult and complicated than competitive evaluation because it is internal and subjective, but it works.We evaluate by simply asking- "How well did *we* succeed, as a group and as individuals, while doing this task together ? What could *we* have done to maximise and utilize our learning and resources? Rather than, "How well and in what areas did I succeed, that makes me superior to the people I worked with ?

Evaluation is only useful if it helps us assess our personal progress, for our own information and to undertake further learning- not for the information of a teacher, government or education department. Many people use competitive test information for self evaluation. But test results are frequently used to grade, rank and otherwise tell people that their peers are better or worse and as such have more or less value and worth in schools, sport and the community.

RECORDING PERSONAL PROGRESS

(a) Written records

Kaseman and Kaseman suggest record-keeping as the most accurate way to monitor personal progress, either as an individual, part of family or part of a team - diaries, photo albums, video-tapes of projects, etc. Keeping records of activities and achievements not only says to the child that you think what they do is important, it becomes a tangible measure of how far they have come. Records are a valuable tool for review that serve as very satisfactory evidence for anyone who is willing to spend the time reading them that the learning process is taking place.

(b) Environment

A child's learning environment is something else that can also be evaluated. What constitutes the environment - books, resources, excursions ? How can the child's living/learning environment be improved? Is the child able to work on projects relatively easily ? Do they have enough materials? Do they have access to relevant books? Do they like being in their work-area? Is there anything that could be added or taken away to make the environment more pleasant and useful ? And so on.

Useful evaluation is finding the balance between what is invasion and what is necessary feedback. Learning to evaluate is simply another skill. Ultimately, we all have to accept that no test, worksheet nor evaluation can really determine what any person knows in every area. In fact learning is so diverse and so much an intricate part of our lives that it cannot be stopped, but it can sometimes be thwarted.

To learn people need to have trust, time and freedom. Trust in their ability to find out, pursue and achieve to their own unique potential. Time to attend to their learning needs that is not artifically imposed or limited. Freedom to understand that all learning is important and of value.

Kaseman & Kaseman Taking Charge Through Homeschooling Stoughton, Wisconsin Koshkonong Press 1992

Kohn, Alfie. No Contest The Case Against Competition Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company. 1986.

Home educating a child who has been labelled "learning disabled"

Anna Adams

One challenge to parents who wish to homeschool the child who has been identified as 'learning-disabled' is that they feel they lack the expertise to cope with the problem. Despite the fact that schools do not boast much success with these children, often educators are very reluctant to allow these children to learn at home. Parents can find themselves intimidated with jargon about minimal brain dysfunction and yet, they become desperate to find some solution to meet the obvious reality of a very unhappy child, that they love and for whom they want the very best education .

There is mounting literature that challenges strongly the very concepts of "learning disabled" and even "hyperactivity". For many parents, it is a relief to hear that perhaps, their intuition that their child is not really "dyslexic" is correct. In fact rather than the child having a problem with learning, the teacher does not have the skills to teach him, ("dysteachia"). Those children who are labelled "worksheet disabled" or "curriculum dysfunctional" may just not find the particular school program entertaining, useful or involving.(See Armstrong 1987 p 40.).

There are a few books that should be considered indispensable for the parent of a child who has already been labelled as "learning-disabled". Gerard Coles' "Learning Mystique" is the first. It is a brilliant analysis of hundreds of studies concerning Learning Disabled children and attitudes.

" The crux of my argument is that the very existence of this "condition" has been virtually unproven, with only the shakiest of evidence reported, and that it has certainly been claimed in far greater proportion than it actually occurs. After decades of research, it has still not been demonstrated that disabling neurological dysfunctions exist in more that a minuscule number of these children. A review I published in 1978 illustrates the point: most studies of the ten major diagnostic tests have not proved that the tests can differentiate between learning-disabled and non-learning disabled children; the few studies that do claim to validate the tests have serious methodological flaws." xii

"The invalid assumptions behind the learning disabilities explanation centre almost exclusively on what is happening inside children's heads and misdirect diagnosis and remedial programs. At the same time,they hinder the pursuit of other explanation, of preventative strategies, and of truly effective methods for addressing the problems when they do occur. "...

Coles' analysis is as chilling & horrifying as Schrag and Divoky's work "The Myth of the Hyperactive Child". Horrifying because children's lives are often scarred by the consequences these powerful labels carry. All parents need to be aware that there is a body of quite expert literature that does not accept the concepts of "learning-disabled", " dyslexia" or "minimal brain dysfunction" as valid explanations or useful tools in understanding teaching/learning interactions with children.

Other thoughts on this issue have been formulated by Thomas Armstrong, psychologist, learning specialist, lecturer and university teacher. His book "In Their Own Way" is a positive recognition of the unique nature of human learning. He talks of the seven intelligences -linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial,bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal and intrapersonal. His exciting development of the work of Howard Gardener gives practical suggestions on identifying your child's learning style and how to relate different styles to different subject areas.

John Holt was another educator who felt that any teacher's task was finding ways to help children learn, rather than explanations or excuses for why they weren't learning. Undistracted by obsession with what might be wrong, Holt and Armstrong both focus on what is right and amplify this in order to make new discoveries and new understandings. "Learning All The Time" is a compilation of hundreds of ideas gleaned over the years from Holt's writings about many subjects. Finally, the powerful story written by Lori and Bill Granger "The Magic Feather", about the impact on a family, of the labelling of a child as "disabled" is essential reading. It explains this family's successful fight against the labelling - a story about a child learning successfully outside of school and "special education classes".

Armstrong, T. In Their Own Way: Discovering & Encouraging Your Child's Personal Learning Style. Los Angeles, Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc. 1987.

Coles, G. The Learning Mystique: A Critical Look at Learning Disabilities. New York, Fawcett Coumbine. 1987.

Granger, B. & L. The Magic Feather : The Truth About Special Education. New York, Delta. 1989.

Holt, J. Learning All The Time. Reading, Addison Wesley 1989

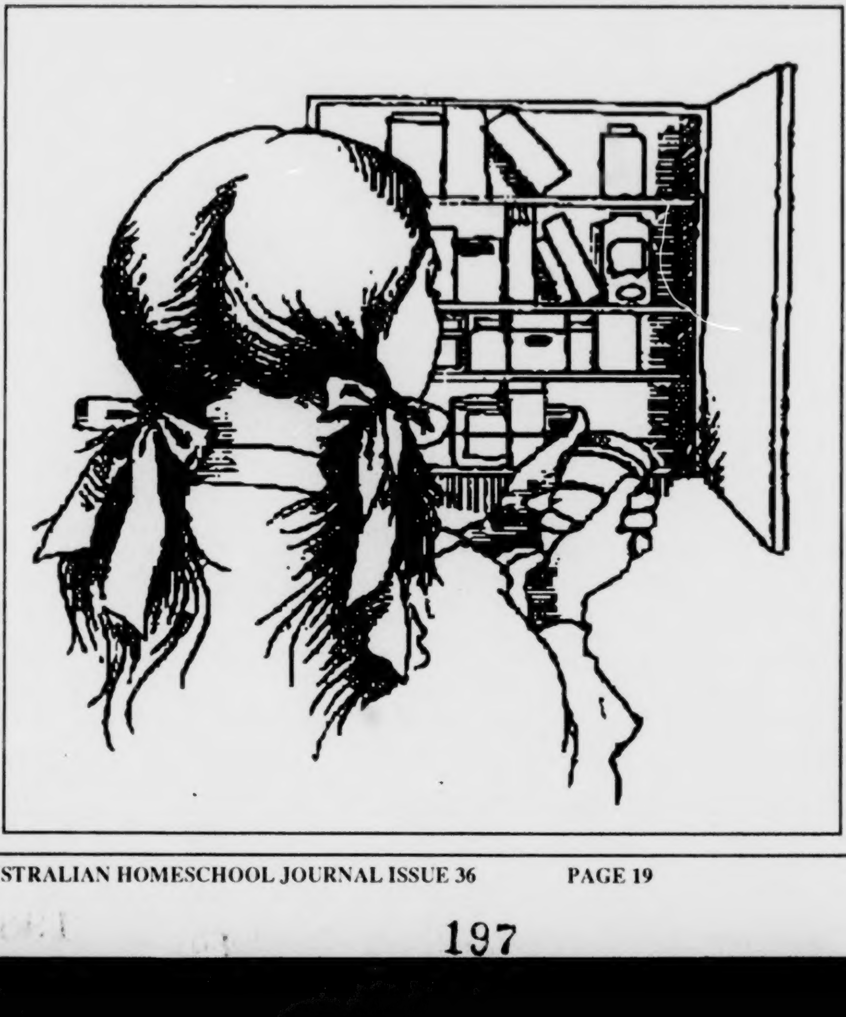
Ritalin : Uppers for Children

Lynne Paige Walker & Ellen Hodgson Brown

Reprinted from Mother to Mother Another View Autumn 1991.

While amphetamines have for the most part been superseded as medical therapies, they remain popular in the treatment of hyperactive children. Between 1985 and 1988, sales of the amphetamine methylphenidate (Ritalin) increased by 97 percent. The drug is now used to treat an estimated one million Americanchildren, or some 3-5% of the school-age population. Other amphetamines used for this purpose are dextroamphetamine (Dexedrine, Dexampex, Ferndex), and pemoline (Cylert).

Although amphetamines are stimulants, they have the property of calming down hyperactive children. This effect was considered paradoxical, until researchers had a closer look at it. Stimulants, it seems, have the same effect on problem children as on normal adults: they increase the ability to concentrate on a task. The child sits still and gets down to work. Children on Ritalin perform better on certain types of tests, especially those requiring attention and motivation. In one recent study, two thirds of the hyperactive children tested improved academically, socially, or both, on the drug.Hyperactive children on Ritalin work faster and make fewer mistakes. This is also true of adults on coffee.



Amphetamines are notorious for their illicit use by college students to get through exams. One problem with Ritalin is that high school students are peddling it to their friends for the same purpose. Another problem is that a significant amount of information learned while on Ritalin is forgotten when the child is taken off the drug. This is also a known drawback of studying on "speed".

Most reviewers have concluded that Ritalin has neither short term nor long term beneficial effects on academic performance. The main problem with amphetamine treatment is that it doesn't teach the child anything. The ability to concentrate on a task is improved by chemical means, but the drugs don't seem to affect reasoning, problem solving, or learning, in adults or children. Children on Ritalin who have been followed through high school still have trouble with their families and still have academic and behaviour problems at school. Hyperactive boys on Ritalin are no less likely than other hyperactive boys to be arrested and institutionalized for juvenile delinquency. At best, the drug masks the underlying problem, so parents and clinicians can avoid dealing with it. As any mother knows, coffee is bad for children because it stunts their growth and Ritalin is also subject to this side effect.

Amphetamines affect the release of growth hormones at a time when children are still growing. Most researchers think this doesn't cause an actual loss of height, since the child catches up on "drug holidays". But the matter isn't settled. Ritalin also has other side effects, including sleeplessness, loss of appetite, irritability, headaches, fatigue, withdrawal, crying for no apparent reason, abnormal sensitivity to criticism and depression. The most serious potential side effect is the development of tics, or involuntary, darting, purposeless motor movements of the face or arms. In the worst cast, the tics can progress to "Tourette's syndrome," a condition characterized by generalized jerking movements in any part of the body, accompanied by a tendency to use foul language and to repeat words heard.

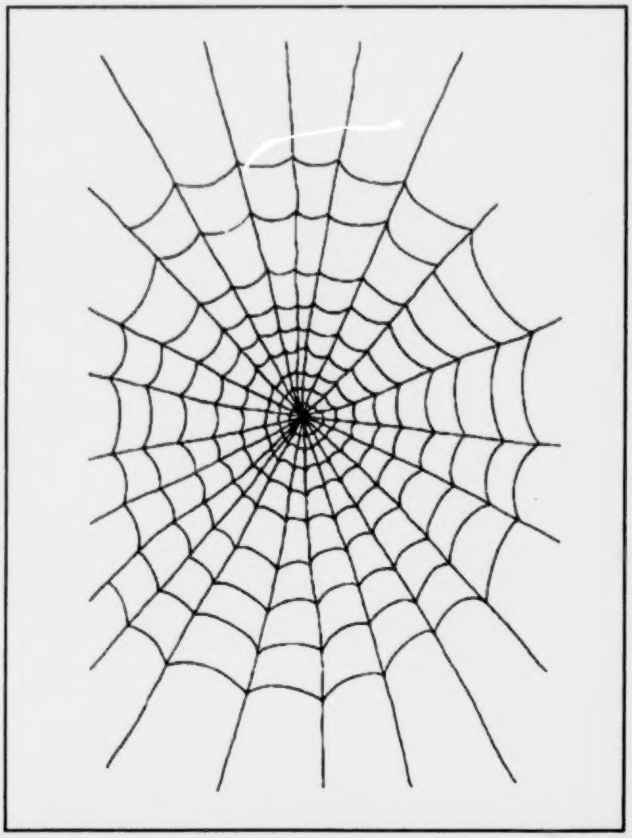
These side effects have led to a spate of lawsuits in the U.S. on behalf of children allegedly harmed by inappropriate use ofthe drug. One child/plaintiff was forced by school employees to take Ritalin to avoid being expelled from school. He took it for about four years, during which he suffered insomnia, bad dreams and slowed growth. He also became violent and suicidal, traits common to "speed freaks". Another child is alleged to have suffered from nausea, insomnia, hallucinations, depression, and suicidal thoughts during his three years on the drug. His mother reports that on one occasion, he lay in the street during rush hour because "his mind told him to." On another occasion he said he wanted to be dead. He lost weight, was uncoordinated, and "seemed retarded".

Ritalin is prescribed for children with a condition formally characterised as "attention deficit hyperactivity disorder," or "minimal brain dysfunction." The disorder is considered to be a form of brain damage, but studies have been unable to find consistent, objective evidence of it. The disorder is also not defined by a consistent cluster of symptoms. In fact, the American Psychiatric Association's official criteria for its diagnosis could apply to most children. As comedian Bill Cosby (who has five children) points out: "All children have brain damage...If you know you're not supposed to do something and you do it and then people say why did you do it and you say "I don't know," that's brain damage."

According to the American Psychiatric Association, a child is considered to have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder who shows eight of the following symptoms for at least six months, beginning before his seventh birthday: 1. Often fidgets his hands or feet or squirms in his seat. 2. Has trouble staying in his seat when required. 3. Is easily distracted. 4. Has trouble waiting his turn. 5. Often blurts out answers before the question is completed. 6. Has trouble doing chores or otherwise following through with instructions. 7. Has trouble sustaining attention to work or play activities. 8. Often shifts from one unfinished task to another. 9. Has trouble playing quietly. 10. Often talks too much. 11. Often interrupts others or butts into other children's games. 12. Doesn't seem to listen to what's being said. 13. Often loses things (toys, pencils, books, assignments). 14. Does dangerous things without considering the consequences, like running into the street without looking.

Most children display some of these symptoms; and it's this vagueness in diagnosis that has led to most of the problems with Ritalin use. Where the only alternative is to institutionalize the child, the drug is obviously the best choice of treatment. But it is often given to children whose problems can be corrected by other means. As John Coale, a personal injuries lawyer representing Ritalin victims, observes: Many of the kids I see (on Ritalin) are highly creative children with high IQs who are obviously just plain bored in school. They're being drugged because they're intelligent. Other possibilities include nutritional deficiencies, low blood sugar, food allergies, or hay fever and the drugs used to treat it. Hay fever can cause irritability, mood swings, and insomnia and the drugs can make victims drowsy and slow. The result can be a short attention span, difficulty learning, and disruptive behaviour in school.

The Feingold Association offers support for Dr Ben Feingold's special diet which links certain foods and additives to one's behaviour and ability to learn. I have seen homeopathic remedies work wonders in these areas, administered by a trained professional. Quite often children are simply having reactions to their environment or medications they are already on. If your child has been diagnosed as being hyperactive or having Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) please investigate alternatives it could save your child's life and your sanity. (Excerpted with permission from The Informed Consumer's Pharmacy "The Essential Guide to Prescription and Over the Counter Drugs" by Lynne Paige Walker & Ellen Hodgson Brown, publishers Carroll & Graff.



Update on 'The Family' Court case.

Mediation Victory - Vindication

At 6am on the 15th of May a series of pre-dawn raids were executed on 6 homes of a Christian group called The Family in Sydney and Victoria. This was the culmination of months of intensive surveillance by Police in both States. What followed was for us the most incredible, heavy handed action taken by the authorities we could have imagined in a supposedly democratic "free" country. In a dramatic show of force, doors were kicked in and swarms of police and community services workers flooded in.

In Sydney 72 children were taken from their beds, some while they were still asleep or in their nightclothes, and without shoes or extra clothes they were loaded into waiting buses, which took them to three undisclosed detention centres. Within 2 hours, thanks to a solicitor friend, we were miraculously provided with a magnificent legal team.

Over that weekend we didn't know where our children were being kept and the children had been lied to being told them that they were just "going away for the week-end or the day", in order for the Dept. to "talk to them."

Monday the 18th of May saw the release of 6 older teens and one very young child as well as the "Care Applications" being put forth by the Department on the other 65 children still in custody who were aged 3-15 years. At this time we were told the Dept was seeking to keep the children in their care for at least a year.

The children, here in Sydney, were released on the Thursday night of that week (May 21st) after the magistrate had visited our homes, and found them to be "above standard". He also spoke to all the children whom he found "delightful and articulate". The kids arrived home 6 hours short of a traumatic week away from their loved ones .

While in "care" of the Dept. the children were tested in reading, comprehension, spelling and maths. Nearly all of the children were way above average in the first three and maths was more average. Many of the workers in the homes where the children were kept commented on the children's helpfulness, sweet dispositions and love and concern for each other.

The effects of this time have been marked on the children with one of the 5 year olds now being afraid of buses. Many of the children are still suffering from nightmares and one 12 year old girl jumps whenever she hears trucks rumble past the house at night fearing the door is again being kicked in and she might be taken away again. We could give a long list of negative effects on the children from this whole experience, however we won't get into it here and we know that with love, care, prayer and time it will fade.

The court case started July 27th and at that time we were given a suggested order in event that the children were found to be in need of care. These included having certain children "assessed and tested" by Dept. of School Education, "enrolling all the school age children in community schools, either Government or registered non-government schools...and to follow recommendations made by the Dept. of School Education about involvement of any child in extra-curricular activities." Also whether there was any proved abuse or not they were calling for psychological assessments of each of the children for the purpose of "determining the cognitive, social and emotional developmental levels of each child."

The proceedings never got past its first witness and now a stay order is in place for the year, at the end of which it will be "unconditionally withdraw(n)".

As you may have heard a mediation - the first of its kind in a child welfare case in Australia - was thrashed out in a marathon 17 hours of negotiation with the Dept. of Community Services, before Sir Laurence Street, former Chief Justice of NSW. This means the case is now essentially over.

As with any mediation, ground had to be given on both sides. The sacrifices we have made include allowing the Board of Studies to check our homeschooling 6 monthly for a year and having our children over five years of age attend 3 hours of weekly activities outside our homes. We have agreed to comply with these restrictions and although we don't like the thought of being told we "have" to attend these activities, if that's all we have to do to get DOCS out of our lives, it bears no comparison to sitting in court for another year.

The key points in the Principal Agreement read:
"DOCS does not seek as part of these arrangements any direct contact by any of its officers with or supervision by any of its officers of any of the parents or of the children."
"DOCS will not pursue the obtaining of further evidence in support of these care applications..."

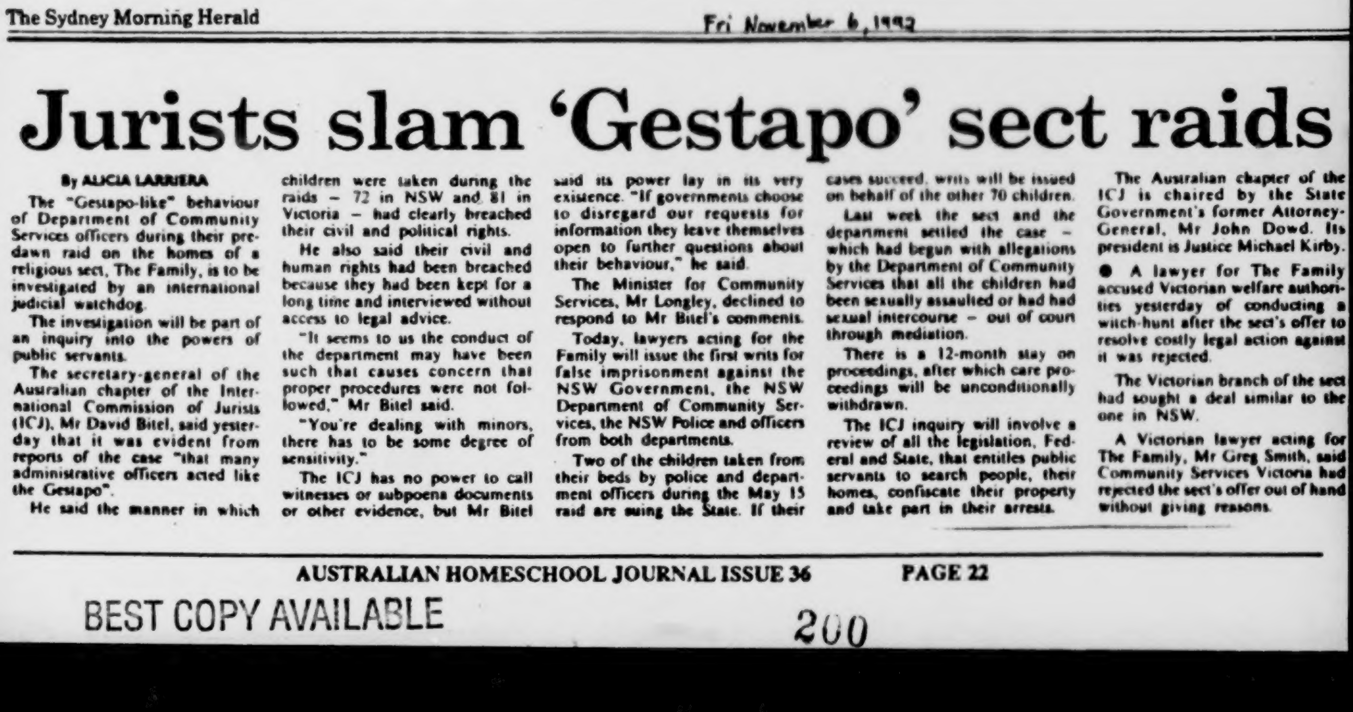
It must be emphasised that in the mediation that David Marchant (Acting Head of DOCS) and the Dept. of Community Services (DOCS) signed to say DOCS agreed with the following statement: "The parents do not concede any wrong doing on their part or any need for care orders and consent to the current arrangement solely in the interests of relieving their children of the burden of the continuation of the current Court proceedings. The parents in no way acknowledge any deficiency in the socialisation of their children."

You might note, as we do, that this statement does not go far enough in proclaiming our innocence. But I would like to emphasise that despite 6 months of intensive surveillance of our homes and incredibly heavy interviews and examinations of our children, no parent has been charged with any form of abuse of their child. In fact, in Victoria, where a similar case is presently proceeding, the allegations of sexual abuse have never been pursued at all.

After the mediation, Sir Laurence Street commented "I should say, in particular, that I was impressed with the maturity of judgement of the six children who attended, bearing in mind their ages." We felt this spoke very highly in favour of our kids' socialisation and goes along with numerous reports, throughout the case, of them being "articulate, delightful, well mannered, happy, considerate, mature and sociable".

Just a note, if anyone would like to write to us, receive our statements or know more our address is
P.O. Box 1671, Macquarie Centre, NSW 2113

Best wishes;
B. (name withheld for legal reasons)



The Sydney Morning Herald

Fri November 6, 1992

Jurists slam 'Gestapo' sect raids

By ALICIA LARRIERA

The "Gestapo-like" behaviour of Department of Community Services officers during their pre-dawn raid on the homes of a religious sect, The Family, is to be investigated by an international judicial watchdog.

The investigation will be part of an inquiry into the powers of public servants.

The secretary-general of the Australian chapter of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), Mr David Bitel, said yesterday that it was evident from reports of the case "that many administrative officers acted like the Gestapo".

He said the manner in which children were taken during the raids – 72 in NSW and 81 in Victoria – had clearly breached their civil and political rights.

He also said their civil and human rights had been breached because they had been kept for a long time and interviewed without access to legal advice.

"It seems to us the conduct of the department may have been such that causes concern that proper procedures were not followed," Mr Bitel said.

"You're dealing with minors, there has to be some degree of sensitivity."

The ICJ has no power to call witnesses or subpoena documents or other evidence, but Mr Bitel said its power lay in its very existence. "If governments choose to disregard our requests for information they leave themselves open to further questions about their behaviour," he said.

The Minister for Community Services, Mr Longley, declined to respond to Mr Bitel's comments.

Today, lawyers acting for the Family will issue the first writs for false imprisonment against the NSW Government, the NSW Department of Community Services, the NSW Police and officers from both departments.

Two of the children taken from their beds by police and department officers during the May 15 raid are suing the State. If their cases succeed, writs will be issued on behalf of the other 70 children.

Last week the sect and the department settled the case – which had begun with allegations by the Department of Community Services that all the children had been sexually assaulted or had had sexual intercourse – out of court through mediation.

There is a 12-month stay on proceedings, after which care proceedings will be unconditionally withdrawn.

The ICJ inquiry will involve a review of all the legislation, Federal and State, that entitles public servants to search people, their homes, confiscate their property and take part in their arrests.

The Australian chapter of the ICJ is chaired by the State Government's former Attorney-General, Mr John Dowd. Its president is Justice Michael Kirby.

● A lawyer for The Family accused Victorian welfare authorities yesterday of conducting a witch-hunt after the sect's offer to resolve costly legal action against it was rejected.

The Victorian branch of the sect had sought a deal similar to the one in NSW.

A Victorian lawyer acting for The Family, Mr Greg Smith, said Community Services Victoria had rejected the sect's offer out of hand without giving reasons.

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FOCUS:
What Socialization Means

How do homeschoolers themselves define socialization? What kind of social interaction do they value, and what opportunities do they have for engaging in it? For this issue's Focus, several young readers answer these questions.

Close Friends, Not "Sort of" Friends

From Megan Cohen of California:

I think socialization is being able to have friends and being able to keep them, but also being able to be independent and not totally relying on them. Also being able to talk to them and being able to work out arguments.

Most of my friends range from ages 8 to 11 and half of them live on the East Coast (New York) and the other half live on the West Coast (California). This situation makes it hard for me to keep friends, and I'm always wondering if my friends remember me. I think having two close long-term friends is better than having ten sort-of friends. When I was in preschool in New York I met a girl and even though I moved to San Francisco we keep in touch and are best friends when I go to New York every summer.

As for the question, "Is it harder having friends when you are homeschooling?" I say definitely not. I've also gone to school and there weren't many girls in my class and the boys were immature and basically so were the girls! But homeschooling opened my horizons because in school I felt limited to the kids in my class, but I don't feel that way anymore. In school there was this girl named Bella in my class, and we were friends. Then she joined the clique which I wasn't part of because I hated one of the girls in it. (A clique is a bunch of kids who are like a club and who don't play with anyone else but other kids in the clique.) Then Bella and I both started homeschooling and since then we've become best friends.

Pen-Pals Can Be Real Friends...

From Cora Nielsen (VT):

I enjoy situations where there are only three or fewer people more than I enjoy situations where there is a crowd of at least five. You are able to hold a person's attention much more easily in a smaller group.

I think that it is important to be able to get along with people who are different from you in some way - age, for instance. Age doesn't really matter all that much to me. I enjoy being with adults at least as much as I enjoy being with people my age and younger. I have two very good friends who are both around 10. (I'm almost 13.) One goes to school and one I met at the Hulbert Outdoor Center program for homeschoolers when she was almost 9.

I also have some older friends, two in particular, homeschoolers, who I think enjoy being with me as much as I enjoy being with them, which is important too. They are both good correspondents, which is nice, and we visit each other whenever we can. I met them at camp, and we started writing afterwards. We discovered that we both like Beatles music, and we started writing back and forth about music. When we visited each other we had a really good time making up our own oldies music show, and after that we kept writing back and forth and sending songs through the mail. So I think you can share interests with friends through the mail. You can keep secrets for pen-pals and help them with problems, too. I think if my pen-pals had a problem I could help them out. I could write to them, or if I couldn't think of anything to say in a letter I could call them up. But even though I don't see them every day I can still care about them.

So I guess it doesn't much matter to me whether it's a pen-pal or a friend next door, or if the person's 7 or 91. Real friends are what I look for. To me, a real friend is someone who doesn't go behind your back and say mean things about you. It's somebody who's always your friend, not somebody else's friend one day and yours the next. A real friend is constant, not fickle.

...And So Can Brothers

From Christopher Roch (PEI):

To me socialization means to have a good relationship with someone. I'm comfortable socializing with other kids, but it's not a big deal to be around other kids. I have one friend my own age who I feel I can communicate with. He knows what I'm talking about, and I understand him.

I have an especially good relationship with my oldest brother, Colin. He teaches me things and helps me with things. I feel I know him really well, almost as well as he knows himself, or that's what I think. He probably gives me more than I give him, but I give to him by just being there. I'm practically always with him. He likes me because I'm enthusiastic about almost everything he likes, and he can do what he likes around me.

I help him by giving him ideas or figuring things out for him. We made a game called "Treasure Island" together, and I thought of quite a lot of the rules and the size and shape of the board, of how to steal the treasure, of the speed the ships could travel, and the number of men they could carry. But I couldn't have done the project alone. I might have given up. Colin found a way to counteract some problems. He did the sawing of the pieces, although I helped sand them. I held it and assisted him, but I couldn't saw it myself.

Sometimes I just observe Colin working on a project, like when he discovered an old well and excavated it. I would read what he wrote on the computer, and I went down the well with a rope harness he made. Another time Colin made a crossbow and decided to make another one which was quite a lot better than the first one, so he gave me the little one, and I decided to improve it. I knew how to do this because I'd seen Colin make a spring trigger.

These are just a few examples of how I like to socialize.

Different and Proud of It

From Anne Brosnan (KY):

I think that when homeschoolers answer the socialization question in the usual way they are only trying to prove to skeptics that yes, homeschoolers have a social life as good as school kids their age. We act as if we want to have the same kind of social life as schooled kids, but a lot of homeschoolers have spoken and written about the kind of social life they have or want to have, and it is something entirely different. We all seem to know that the quality of friendship is what counts, and not the amount of friends; that you can live in the middle of New York City and not have any friends or live in a rural community with acquaintances for miles around - that everything depends on the kind of person you are.

To me, it is like taking a person from a northern part of the country, raising them in the south, and then expecting this person to grow up talking and acting as if he were from the north. Why do homeschooling parents take their kids out of school, raise them in a home/family environment, and then spend their time gloating over the fact that they've managed to make their kids' social lives as glamorous as the social lives of their schooled counterparts?

I think that instead of trying to prove to ourselves and others that homeschoolers won't grow up "different from all the other kids," we should simply start acknowledging the fact that most homeschoolers don't fit into a school-type social group and couldn't care less. I am only speaking from my point of view, though, as I have never had that kind of social life and don't wish that I had or did. I know many homeschoolers near my age (15) who have decided to go to school, and the biggest reason they go is to have more friends and to belong to a social type of group. Many of them meet very nice, interesting people, but often they meet a group of kids who think that all the kids in the other groups are snobs, and don't socialize with them. I may be wrong, but I have had a little experience with this and it seems to me that within any high school, or even elementary school, you find these groups of kids who socialize with each other and not with any other group, and it becomes almost an ethnic thing, each group having its own culture, sometimes conflicting with other groups and sometimes ganging up on a member of their own group because he or she was seen hanging around with someone the others didn't want to socialize with.

To me, friendship and socializing are two different things. Friendship, I think, is ultimately a one-to-one kind of deal. If you can't be friends with someone just because you don't like their other friends, then you are missing the whole heart of the matter. Instead, it's better to concentrate only on this one person and become friends with that sole being, not his environment, family, or other friends, but that person, his nature, attitude, likes, and dislikes. Sometimes this means that you yourself must change to adapt to different situations and the friends you may make in those situations. I know that I have a lot of different personalities, a lot of different sides I show to different people, yet they are all true; I never act falsely or try to be somebody I'm not. Since I take people one-on-one, in many different situations, I know that some of my friends would most likely not get along with my other friends, but this doesn't matter. My friends don't need to group together, to form "clubs," to exclude other people and all be one of a kind.

Emily Linn 6/92

I also have friends who are different religions and races than I am, and that has definitely never been an obstacle of any kind. I think that since I was not raised in any one religion, I have been able to grow up with an open mind toward all religions and able to accept people from all kinds of religions as my friends. I know that in the present day, religious discrimination is not as apparent as it once may have been, but I have known children who were prejudiced against other children because of their religious beliefs. I don't mean to imply in any way that all people who are religious are prejudiced against others or that people who aren't particularly religious are not prejudiced. I simply think that in my case, when I become friends with someone I think of them as one single person, not as a representative of a race or religion, so in this way it is easy to overcome any barriers that might have been there.

I have had bad experiences with groups of kids who gather together and talk about meaningless topics and speak rudely or vulgarly towards each other, never get anything accomplished, never talk of anything meaningful. I have not often encountered young people who socialize in a better way - who do things together, or who spend time having quiet, thoughtful, meaningful conversations. There have been some instances when I have socialized with groups of adults or people of mixed ages and there has been an overall sense of well-being and direction. One of these has been with groups of musicians, when we spend a lot of time talking about the music or the instruments and then play music together. In these instances we all have a common objective. Another instance is at a historic house/farm where my mother and I are volunteers. Every once in a while the volunteers get together and have a potluck supper, and we talk of hundreds of interesting things about the house and family and the history and the region, and people come up with new facts and anecdotes, and everybody feels at peace with one another, because we are all involved in the same project.

I think that when a group of people are socializing they should all have a common objective, but they don't all have to agree with one another or be like one another. Arguing is one of the best ways to find new ideas about things or answers to questions, and a medley of different types of people makes the world interesting. A group of school kids, all the same age, with the same hairdos, wearing the same fashionable clothes, who all watch the same TV shows, don't socialize with each other with a common objective in mind - to get something done, to argue something out, to discover something new. They socialize because they want to talk about themselves, to show they fit in, to gather self-esteem from the knowledge that they fit in and are not outcasts or misfits. I don't understand how they can ever achieve self-esteem if their objective is to be like other people.

Most of the time, I am at peace with myself and I can spend hours and hours alone with myself and my thoughts. I am not talkative, but neither am I shy. I like being around people, and though I myself am not good at conversation, I like most of all to listen to other people as they talk amongst each other. I also like to travel and see new places and new people, so I think I am a social person. But unlike others, I don't like the type of socialization that school offers, and I would never go to school for the social aspect. Through my interests, I eventually meet people who can be the right kind of friends, and once in a while I find the right kind of socialization, too.

Looking for Common Interests

From Geoffrey Litwack (PA):

Socialization. That's usually the first thing people ask me about when I tell them I'm homeschooled. "But how do you find friends?" they say. Usually I blow them off with something like, "Oh, I have plenty of friends from karate, camp, etc." But really, deep down inside, I feel kind of insecure. I have very few true

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friends, but I think they're enough - I have three really good friends, and then I have some other so-so friends that I know, and like, and hang out with sometimes. It's my experience that in school, it's basically the same thing. You have a few good friends you can trust, and then you have a whole bunch of people that you know slightly and can converse with on occasion.

When I meet someone new I try and see if we have anything in common. Does he have a Macintosh? Do we play the same computer games? Does he play role-playing games? Stuff like that. I determine if we have anything in common, if we'd make a decent pair. I would never discriminate against someone because of his skin color, or religious beliefs, because in the long run, that's not really important. What is important is that you share the same set of ideals. For instance, if someone is the "Hey, I've got an idea, why don't we go stick a firecracker down the tailpipe of that car over there" type of person, I don't think we'd make very good friends, because that's not what I like to do.

I do have some adult friends, but I don't normally just hang out with them. Usually I do something with them. For instance, my friend Jim is a professional photographer. I go down to the city with him and we take pictures and develop them.

I've had my fair share of people who I thought were friends, but it actually turned out that they were trying to get something from me. This made me sort of paranoid at the time, but I guess I can accept it now, even though it's strange to me because I don't really act that way. But it's not like I'm usually tricked by people. I think I'm pretty good at choosing my friends and knowing who I can trust.

Different Types of People

From Ginny Hood (MD):

My definition of socialization is this: having learning experiences outside the home. It is best to have a mixture of acquaintances - people with different values, of different ages and races, all sorts of people. Socialization means dealing with people who aren't exactly like you. Some people are nuisances. Others are good friends you'd like to have forever. I get to meet different kinds of people by going out in the world. Some people think homeschoolers are just locked up in closets, but that isn't true. I meet many different types of people in theater, for instance. To me, a well-socialized person is a person who can get along with many different types of people.

I'm in a library volunteer program. Many of the people there don't have the same values as me. There is one girl who was chattering away with me about how she had been in *The Wizard of Oz* and how it didn't leave her any time for other activities. I knew she was lying and hadn't been in the play, because I had been in *Oz* myself. You have to be aware of people who lie, so you don't believe everything that you hear. However, you have to be considerate. That girl probably wanted a role just as badly as I did.

For me, theater and Girl Scouts are both good for socialization. Theater is nice because it is one of the few times as a kid when you actually feel like you are working, and grown-ups respect you more. On the other hand, Girl Scouts is good for making friends your own age, and talking about stuff that adults don't understand (or have forgotten).

Learning to Compromise

From Nelya Patry of Vermont

About developing the ability to compromise: I think everyone learns this from their parents (or most people do anyway), seeing as there aren't many choices in the matter except maybe to move out, which might not seem like the greatest idea. Last winter when I wanted to go outside and ice skate, my mother said I could stay out for ten minutes, but I wanted to stay out longer. We compromised and agreed on fifteen minutes. Another time, my little brother, who's 3, wanted to stay up and look at a book instead of going to bed. My mother said he could look at the book in bed. Parents teach you about compromising early on. You don't really think about it - you don't realize you're learning to compromise - but for example, my brother found out that he could do something in between what he wanted and what my mother wanted, and that's how he learned.

About realizing that things don't always go one's own way: Last year we had wanted to go to the Vermont Dairy Festival (a sort of fair near us), and what do you think my sister did? She got appendicitis and had to stay in the hospital for a week - which wasn't what I had planned on, but I learned some things about hospitals. I spent four nights with my sister in the hospital. We found out about the nice nurses who were friendly and the not-so-nice ones who rushed you around (my sister had a hard time walking at first) and talked to you as if you were only 5 or 6 (my sister was 12 and I was 14 at the time). We also found out about "yummy" hospital food.

Hard to Get Along with School Kids

From Colin Roch (PEI):

I've become very frustrated over social experiences I've had with my peer group. I have the most interaction with my peers at regular weekly meets of the air cadet squadron I have joined. I get frustrated because of the feeling that I'm so different from the rest. It is nearly impossible for me to have a conversation with anyone, save one or two. I've tried to listen to what most kids talk about, and all I've heard is gabble and sickly laughter; no deep thoughts, questions, or analysis, only monotonous utterances about school. I guess they just talk about what they can relate to in their lives and 90% of it is school. So, already that excludes me from what they can relate to.

They aren't interested in the things I am, probably because they don't have time by themselves to think many thoughts of their own and are turned off being interested in anything. I try to take an interest in what they say, but this is further limited by my strongly set values which are different from the common teenager's.

However, there are some teenagers who go to school whom I can relate to. I do not want to isolate myself from my peers. I realize it is not their fault; they're stuck in school, and I know that I was not myself when I went to school. So, perhaps the only socializing I can do with them is on another level, apart from verbal interaction - just being there being myself, relaxed, etc. I think it is good for them to be around a free-from-school teenager who is not trapped in the acceptable mold.

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I have observed that the people I can talk to are the outcasts from the social superstructure in school, the people who do not conform to the mold school has imposed on them and are persecuted by the rest as a result. I also find these people are interested in homeschooling.

I'm sure more socialization, in all meanings of the word, will occur for me simply as I become more familiar with people around me (specifically in air cadets). And as I move into my chosen career, relationships that do not depend on school will develop.

Having an Adult Friend

From Brenna Yovanoff (CO):

When I first met some kids who'd always gone to public school, such as people from my neighborhood and my soccer team, they wondered if I had any friends. I thought it was kind of funny. I probably spend more time talking and playing with friends than the kids in school have time for. I think the big difference is time.

I feel that I am quite able to get along with people who have different beliefs than mine. For instance, I have some friends who are fundamentalist Christians, and I am a Quaker. We find that it's much easier to simply play games than to have a conversation, but it's still fun to talk as long as we try to keep to subjects that are unlikely to harbor conflict. We can also play imaginary games without any argument. On the whole, I feel that we are able to get along quite well.

A couple of months ago I went to visit a grown-up friend, Cathy, who lives in Louisiana. It took over a year to save the money for my plane ticket. I wasn't worried about flying or traveling alone, but I was a little nervous about all the complicated things you have to do in airports.

I joined Cathy's family for their trip to Florida. It was great to see them all again. I used to help take care of their kids before they moved away from Colorado. Cathy and I share some of the same interests. She's a nature writer and I've been interested in marine biology for several years. We went to a folk festival to see an exhibit that Cathy did about the Sewannee River.

I met two kids my age at a place where we stayed. One has become a pen-pal.

There are some homeschoolers who are isolated. I know kids who don't get into town that often because they live in the mountains. But most homeschoolers I know have lots of opportunities to get to know other people.

Working With People

From Judith Metcalf (TX):

What is socialization? What does it really mean? I've been told that it's the ability to form healthy, lasting relationships; to work through rough times; to work together as a group; to know how to deal with different people and situations. These are just a few examples; I generally agree with them. To me, socialization means the ability to get along with people in real life, to have healthy relationships with friends you can trust.

While homeschooling I have met friends through activities and doing things that I enjoy, such as church, acting lessons, and so on. The friends that I have met through these things have always been very good friends and our relationships have been very stable. I recently tried going to school for a few weeks, and relationships that I formed through school have been short and unstable. I'm not sure I can trust the friends I met there; I'm not sure when they're going to call me next, for example. In school it is hard to do all of the things that prepare you for the real world because of all the cliques and competition. It's hard to see what people are really like.

As a homeschooler I have also been able to talk more easily to adults and older kids because I come into contact with them more often. These are very positive relationships.

I've been in a lot of plays, which involves working with people. Sometimes we would make up skits, and there was a lot of conflict because everyone had different ideas about what they wanted to do and it was hard to make up our minds. I often found myself being mediator between people who would get angry at each other. So another aspect of socialization, to me, is the ability to listen to everybody's ideas and then make a decision based on that.

Lasting Friendships Within Family

From Nicholas Roch (PEI):

I have never in my life had a deep, lasting friendship with someone apart from my family. I have had the odd good friend at school (when I went to school), but these supposed friends only wrote one or two letters to me after I moved away, and they soon got tired of writing and gave up. I am not sure why they gave up writing, and this crosses my mind often, but it showed me what kind of friendship we really had.

I've only had lasting friendships in my family, with my two brothers and my parents. I am not embarrassed having a relationship with my family and hope I never will be. We have had the odd quarrel, but this is one way to sort personal issues out. A lot of people think I should be socializing with other children, but I find I can't socialize easily with kids who go to school.

I find it hard to get along with people who don't have the same interests as me. If I were to start a friendship with someone who had completely different beliefs, then we would be sure to argue and not continue being friends. The perfect friend to me would be a boy about the same age, who had some of the same interests, who wouldn't mind if I was wearing unfashionable clothes or didn't act cool. But I feel that I don't need any friends outside the family. I'm already happy.

To be popular with some of the kids from the local school I would have to change my personality completely, and not in a way I would like to change it. Being around hundreds of children all day does have some effect on you. You soon want to play outside with your friends 'til 10:00 and want to go to the discos that other children go to. But then your parents might say you can't, and you will hate them for that. So this kind of socialization isn't good for you; it takes you away from your family. When other children's parents ask me, "What about the socialization aspect of homeschooling?" I get so frustrated. They don't know what socialization is doing to their family.

Best Friends Despite Differences

From Jeremiah Gingold (CA):

I live in an extremely isolated area, where friends of any sort, let alone good ones, are hard to come by. This makes the few friends that I do have all the more valuable to me, and I do my best to keep them. Over the years most of the friends I've made here have moved.

My best friend of eight years (whom I seldom see) has a completely different background from mine. He's gone to school all his life, he always goes to church, he's more of an average teenager than me. He is politically and religiously conservative, while I consider myself very liberal; as a result we are constantly arguing over political issues and religion. And yet, he *is* the best friend I've ever had. We both *enjoy* debating each other, and neither one of us takes our differences personally (although I sometimes feel pretty frustrated by his thickheadedness!). We've had one or two actual fights, too, but never to the point where we actually dissolved our friendship. We've stayed friends through thick and thin, and we're not prepared to give all of that up for

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nothing.

I would really enjoy having more friends and acquaintances who are a few years older than me. I don't know many, but the few older teenagers that I know make me wish I could get to know more of them better. It seems to me that the greater the age difference between me and my friends, the more easily I can communicate with them on my own level. This seems especially true with the one or two people I know who have gone away to college. Even just a little time in college broadens their horizons immensely. They tend to be more open-minded, having encountered a wider range of people and ideas. Talking to them makes me realize how much of my mind I effectively shut down in order to communicate with my same-age friends. In fact, one of my main reasons for wanting to go to college is to meet more like-minded people who can provide me with the kind of stimulating conversation that I often find lacking.

More Confident

From Vivien Zapf (MD):

I think that homeschooling has allowed me to develop my social skills a lot more than school did. When I went to school there were two things I could do: join a clique and trail around behind a bunch of other people, or stay an individual and be laughed at, whispered about, teased, sneered at, bullied, and otherwise tormented. I don't see how this could have developed my social skills! On the contrary, it stunted them. I became paranoid. Every time I noticed someone looking at me or whispering with someone else, I was sure that I was the topic of their conversation.

It was only after I left school that I opened up and made friends. Now when I overhear someone speaking about me, I don't have to care. If they don't like me, so what? I can leave them and find someone else to make friends with. I'm not stuck with them every day for a whole year or more. As a result of this I am much more confident in myself and make friends a lot more easily.

> **It was only after I left school that I opened up and made friends ... I am much more confident in myself and make friends a lot more easily.**

A point brought up often by critics of homeschooling is that in school you can meet people from all walks of life and learn to socialize with them. Not so! How varied can a group of people be who are all the same age, listen to rock music, wear skin-tight pants, and prop their bangs up two feet in the air? Since I left school, and especially since I started taking classes at the community college, I have met more varied, strange, and unusual people than ever before. College students, mothers who hold two full-time jobs, go to school, and take care of children, senior citizens, construction workers, engineers, and also people I'd rather not meet but are still interesting, like high school drop-outs, drug addicts, and alcoholics. How many school children get to socialize with such an enormous variety of people?

Finding Friends Who Don't Tease

From Jessica Metcalf (TX):

The thing that is hard for me is that kids make fun of me. I have a learning difference because of my eyes, so it is hard for me to make friends. When I had to go to school for half of the day so that they could help me with my difference, the kids in the Learning Lab were very mean to me. They called me a dog one time. My teacher tried to talk to them so they said OK. So the places I mostly meet friends are at church and at activities with other homeschoolers. A lot of the kids at homeschool activities know what it's like to be a homeschooler, they know what it's like to be different, so they're nicer to me.

Friendships With Young Children

From Serena Gingold (CA):

Considering that I don't see other kids frequently, I think that I do fairly well when placed in a group situation or left on my own to make friends. It is easier when I have another friend with me, but even when I am alone I feel confident. Where I live, I don't have *any* friends my age. I've tried to be friends with some, but I am so different, probably because I am homeschooled and care about things other than what's happening in school, what teachers are terrible, did that boy like me, etc. Some people would probably say that I don't try hard enough to make friends or that I don't want to badly enough - not true. I think the main problem is that the other kids don't need me as much as I need them. It doesn't matter to them whether I'm their friend or not because they have other friends at school and they're not missing out on anything. I've almost given up on finding someone my age who lives in my town to be a good friend; but I still hope that maybe someday I might find someone.

I actually have quite a few friends who live in town, and some who live right up the road. However, they are not close in age to me. They are all at least three years younger, if not more, which makes it difficult for me to get everything I want and need out of the friendship. I still have a lot of the kid in me, even though I'm 13 1/2. My younger friends make it possible for me to have someone to play with, which I really enjoy. (Kids my age, especially school kids, never play!) I find it strange, but little kids are attracted to me like ants to a bowl of sugar. I love taking care of little kids and entertaining them, so I think it's wonderful that they love me and I love them. We get along mostly as equals, but they do look up to me because of our difference in age and height (sometimes not height!). I'm thinking of going into a career in child study and development, so I like having the chance to start early.

But all this doesn't make up for not having teenage friends whom I can see regularly, and I know I'm missing something. I realize this especially when I talk with my pen-pal Lluvia Crockett on the phone, or see my pen-pal Cristie Boone. I have wonderful conversations with them about things that I never talk to little kids, or local older kids, about, and I wish they lived closer to me. Lluvia is all the way in Colorado and I have never met her; Cristie is three hours away.

I wish there were someone I could talk with and see all the time. I manage to survive most of the time, but if I get to thinking about it too much I get really depressed and go into a black mood for a day or two. I think that having some good, close pen-pals makes it better in some ways, but sometimes I feel worse because I want to see them and talk to them, and I can't.

Lately we've made three trips to homeschooling conferences and I've made many friends. I've had a lot of offers to spend time with various families, and I hope to have a chance to do this. I'm always working on socialization because of my circumstances, but I think it just comes naturally to people.

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What is the procedure?

1. If you wish to purchase any Apple product, Kurrawood Computers will order, then deliver and install your computer hardware or arrange to have this done for you. Inter-state subscribers will be notified as soon as this service is available nation-wide.

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3. It is essential you be a legitimate homeschooler to participate in this service. It is up to the homeschooler to provide concrete evidence that you are a homeschooler and Homeschoolers Australia reserves the right to protect itself from prosecution by refusing any homeschooler whose evidence of homeschooling is inadequate. A reminder will be sent annually to those people who are registered to ensure your continuing registration with us in case you intend to up-date your hardware.

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To benefit from these prices you must register with Homeschoolers Australia and purchase the software through Kurrawood Computers as Microsoft only allows the educators price for homeschoolers on strict requirement that the purchaser be a registered homeschooler and resident of Australia.

Kurrawood Computers
Software Reviews

Bank Street Writer (Mac)

Bank Street Writer for the Mac adds unique classroom features to a fully featured Mac word processor. So, in addition to multiple fonts and styles, cut and paste editing, multiple windows, and paragraph rulers, students and teachers alike will be able to take advantage of classroom publishing, hypertext, sound and colour. *BSW (Mac)* is more than just another word processor, it is a writing processor.

The Classroom Publishing feature lets students publish their writing in multiple column newsletters, fliers and stories. Hypertext lets you insert a "button" in a document that connects the reader to a note, another file or a sound. It comes with a Clip-art library in colour. "Frozen text" to create assignments students cannot modify. BSW also has Sound input capability, can import text files from other word processors as well as importing graphics. Other features: full colour support, on line spelling checker and thesaurus, on line punctuation and usage guide. Price: $149.00 School edition.

Outnumbered (Mac)

Outnumbered is from the learning company, It supports colour on the Macintosh LC and is part of a new generation of software featuring arcade style graphics, combined with rich educational value. *Outnumbered* is an adventure game which promotes maths skills-incorporating amazing animation sequences and sound effects. School edition features teacher notes and classroom activities.
Price: $115.00

For all our SimCity fans out there Dataflow have released the ***SimCity Graphic Libraries*** for $59.95 you can transport your city to another time and place.

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Other titles include:
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&
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Crawlies.

Macintosh Fonts

Kurrawood Computers have put together a public domain TrueType Font collection for all of you that are running TrueType on your Macintosh's. If you are not running TrueType on your Mac yet then a copy comes on one of the disks, but you must be running system 6.0.7 or later. The collection comes on three 1.44Mb disks or six 800k disks, and is presented in a folder with a printed sample of each font. There are over forty new fonts in the collection and is priced at a low $49.00. Just a taste:

Alison: *The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog.*

ClassicaItalic: *The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog.*

Flinstone: THE QUICK BROWN FOX JUMPED OVER THE LAZY DOG.

The collection has been designed so we can add to the collection, as more fonts become available.

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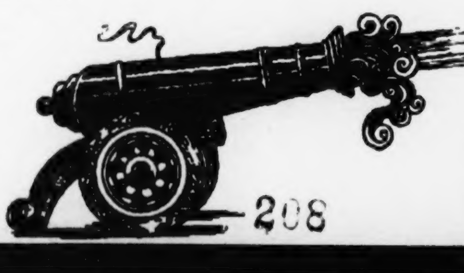

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Parental Warmth is What's Important

(Reprinted from G.W.S. #81)

While schools continue to make the undocumented claim that they offer children better socializing experiences than homeschoolers can, another piece of evidence shows that social maturity is most directly fostered by affectionate parents. "Parenting for Success Study finds warmth at home enhances children's prospects as adults. There is no recipe for raising children to be successful adults, but parental warmth and affection make more of a difference than any other factor, according to a study that tracked how childhood experiences affected adult development 36 years later. Most of the factors that might conceivably affect how children turn out do not make any difference at all, the researchers report. That includes whether parents are punitive or permissive, how well the parents get along (according to the mother), and whether the individual's childhood was difficult." (From the Boston Globe, 4/8/91).

Children who lost a parent or sibling, moved many times, or whose parents divorced did no worse by conventional measures of social accomplishment than those with less stressful childhoods. These findings are being reported in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology by three psychologists who used data at the Henry A. Murray Centre of Radcliffe College to find out how individuals who were first studied at age 5 were doing at the age of 41. The main finding, they wrote, was that "subjects who had warm mothers or warm fathers were more likely to be rated as higher in social accomplishment 36 years later."The original study of 379 mothers of 5 year olds, begun in 1951, focused on child rearing practices and concluded that maternal warmth and affection correlated more strongly with social maturity in children than any other factor studied.

Natural Learning Works !

by Marj Taberner

Philosophically I have believed that Natural Learning works but then, there are always those little nagging doubts around, aren't there? Recently I had a fairly illuminating (for me) example of it which has firmly convinced me that it does REALLY WORK! Our almost 6 year old son David, calmly announced over breakfast one Saturday morning that he would like to write a newspaper. As David doesn't read yet I thought that this was a fairly ambitious project but stopped myself from saying so. I asked him what he wanted to write about and he gave me a list of headings which I printed on to a piece of paper for him. He then dictated to me what was to be said under each heading.

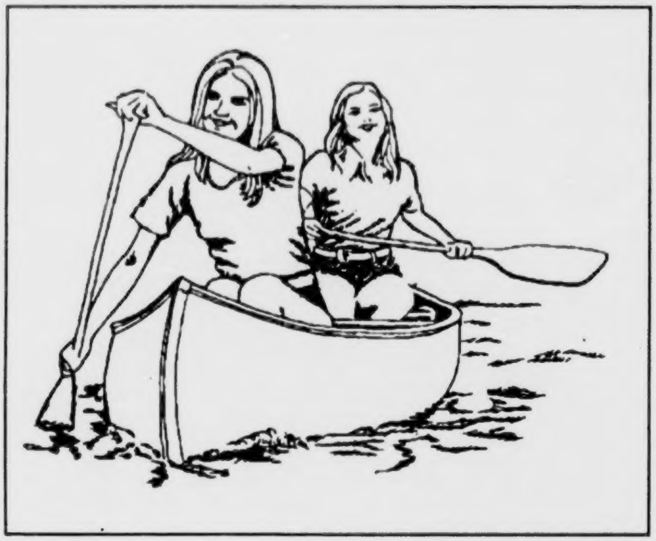
Most "articles" were only one sentence long. Then he asked if he could type them up, which he did over the rest of Saturday and half of Sunday with surprising skill and determination. On Monday my husband took the sheet of paper and made a number of photocopies for David, who then delivered them to a number of neighbours. As a learning experience it was marvelous; David gained in the following ways * the letters of the alphabet were firmly implanted in his brain (not in sequence but for use); * he learned to recognise a few simple words; * he understands upper and lower case; * he knows what commas, apostrophes and full stops are for * he has learnt something about the composition of sentences; * he knows that underlining something adds emphasis to a headline;* he understands in a primitive sense about the gathering and distribution of the news; * he knows that he can contribute to the society in which he lives. I'm now wondering what next ?

The Real World

by Mark Hurst

This article was printed in the Hurst family newsletter that is one of the family-type shared newsletters that are distributed between some homeschooling families in Sydney.

I told someone the other day that we teach our children at home. He asked, "How will your children handle the "real world" when they meet it?" This was not the first time I heard this question but it got me thinking.



"The Real World". Do school children experience the "real world" sitting in a classroom all day with thirty other children? What is the "real world"? Our children haven't experienced an institutionalized school setting but they have...... *lived in three countries * met people from all over the world *visited prisons, half-way houses, hospitals, and senior citizen's homes * gone ice-fishing, cross country skiing, snowmobile riding and snow-shoeing in Labrador where they met native Canadians and saw how these people live *seen whales, seals, and dolphins in their natural environment in New Brunswick * studied tides and ocean life with trained Rangers in Canada's Fundy National Park * learned about geology with a geologist from Macquarie University *visited newspaper companies in both Miami and Sydney and saw how a major newspaper is produced * visited a piano tuner and builder * regularly gone to zoos, parks, museums, historical sites, libraries, concerts, plays, debates, and public events * participated in public marches against war, capital punishment, destruction of the environment, and to raise* money for the hungry * taken classes at the YMCA/YWCA in swimming, diving, racquetball, archery, gymnastics, cooking, kite-making, and baby-sitting training * been involved in ballet classes and performances * delivered meals to elderly people at Christmas * shared their home with University students, ex-offenders, church workers, and travellers from around the world * been to rock concerts, pro sporting events, and agricultural fairs * lived in large and small cities and in the country * made pottery with an accomplished potter * delivered newspapers, cut grass and shovelled snow *helped on construction sites doing clean-up work and travelled with their grandfather picking up material * learned typing *taken art classes in pottery, drawing, painting, and drama * learned to play musical instruments- guitar, piano, drum and bellyre *been paid for work as custodians at a church * corresponded with people from many countries * collected stamps and coins from all over the world * camped with youth groups * appeared on newspaper front pages *often cared for younger children or did baby-sitting * learned wood working with a builder * made and sold the work of their own hands * raised chickens, rabbits, sheep, guinea pigs, fish, cats and a dog *worked at planting and caring for a garden as well as preserving its produce * learned how to cook, bake, buy food, sew, clean, do dishes and do laundry * helped in a craft store doing stock work, inventory, and running the cash register * helped put out mailings, learning to collate, fold, stuff, stamp and send letters * learned from their grandparents about the embroidery and sportswear businesses * visited Amish families and their homes * been camping by the sea and in the mountains *been in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans * been part of homeschooling groups in Georgia, Indiana, Virginia, New Brunswick, and Sydney seen how maple syrup is made * sung as a family in church services and taken part in other ways too, like reading the scripture lesson * been part of a children's church choir and in Sunday School programs *visited Mennonite, Independent, Methodist, United Brethren, United, Uniting, Baptist, Coptic Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Anglican churches and Sunday Schools * visited classes at Universities and seminaries *explored caves in West Virginia and visited a fish hatchery * travelled by car, bike, ferry, prop and jet airplane, canoe, train, snowmobile, komatik, horse and sleigh, and motor, row and sail boats * enjoyed tractor rides, hayrides and sledding with cousins at their grandparents farm *learned to read, write, and do mathematics with the help of their full-time teacher * met people affected by child abuse, broken homes, drugs and alcohol, as well as people with physical and mental handicaps *attended orientations and retreat with other adults and children involved in volunteer and mission work around the world *learned about computers and spend up to ten hours a week using them at our local library *been snorkeling, fishing, and observed spear-fishing underwater *toured the space centre at Cape Canaveral *played in a drum and bugle core *experienced love and acceptance through family, friends, and church......

The "real world". Maybe our kids haven't experienced it yet but when they do, I think they'll be ready for it.

GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING

In 1977 author and teacher John Holt founded *Growing Without Schooling*, the first magazine devoted to exploring and publicizing issues about raising children and helping them learn without attending schools. Since then we have published stories, news, and information about learning outside of school from all over the globe. Each bi-monthly issue contains news about the homeschooling movement in the U.S. and around the world; pen-pal listings; a directory of homeschooling families; reviews of useful materials; a feature on a specific topic or question; in-depth exchanges among our readers about such issues as making a living while teaching your own children, TV and homeschooling, and more. A reader writes: "GWS is the written form of an information network like mothers have had for ears. Perhaps this is a new literary form" Join us today!

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Joanna Hoyt (ME) is interviewed in **GWS #83's** Focus on *Young Lobbyists: Homeschooling Kids in the Legislative Process.*

Christian McKee (WI) wrote for our Focus on *Working Toward a Goal*, **GWS #84.**

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The role of structure in our homeschool

Julie Pinazza

Before one can discuss any aspect of homeschooling, one must look at one's philosophy for homeschooling to begin with. For our family, the decision to homeschool our three boys was a very difficult one because we both were teachers; my husband secondary and myself primary. We therefore believed in much of the public education philosophy. However, when we looked at how to best develop our children's education as they approached "school age" we decided that the environment we had nurtured our children in through their first four years of their life was individualised, catering for their gifts and interests and holistic with varied and frequent socialization. As educationalists we believed we were well equipped to organise our children's learning and to develop their insatiable desire for learning and channel it into learning skills which would equip them to become free thinkers, genuine inquirers, decision makers and learners for a life in which they would aspire for their potential. [That's by no means implying that parents who are not educationalists are less equipped. It just was appropriate preparation for us.] We were committed to provide a framework of learning that looked to the universe, not just to the pragmatic. To use Louise Mare's term, to be "cognitively free", having the freedom of knowing why they believe what they believe.

We wanted to develop in our children a love of literature alongside encyclopaedias, because we believe literature leads to questioning and a discovery of one's own values. We wanted time to develop their love of and gifts in music as a crutch to perception of the universe: to free them from the limits of fashion and "herd instinct". We believe a child cannot overachieve. One can only run a hundred metres as fast as one can run it! As long as progress is initiated by the child and "relatively" stress free, a child will learn as his interest, need and opportunities determine. However, we appreciate that there are many component skills in any learning area and opportunities need to be provided if these are to be explored and mastered.

No child creates without the tools of creativity. No child is socially adept without the tools of socialization. These are gained in a secure, positively reinforcing environment where as many varied opportunities for learning are offered. Therefore as to the question of why structure learning.

It is our belief that in our society we must all live within a structured framework. Indeed, we believe that we have all been born into a structured universe which has order and purpose. In all he does, therefore, a child must learn to appreciate order and structure at his level of development so that he can contribute effectively in the structured world into which he grows.

We organise our days and weeks, therefore, according to a schedule. It is by no means rigid and if necessary or desired, it is abandoned altogether. Generally, however, our children realise they have responsibilities which are to be met each day. The timing of our structure is flexible too but has broad bands of time into which different facets of learning are allotted. Learning to be efficient, wise stewards of our time is something we believe is important. Consequently, expectations of daily achievements are a reasonable way to foster this belief.

The other facet of a structured day is ensuring all or many of the key learning areas are covered consistently, not haphazardly as may otherwise happen. If a child is focussed on an area of interest, that can become the catalyst for explosive learning. However, we find that that can still fit into a structure ensuring literacy, numeracy, technological, social, physical, spiritual skills are incorporated. Some may require greater emphasis with a particular interest area naturally. Of course, there always must be the place for the "drop everything and run with the moment" learning opportunities.

Through negotiated planning we monitor and guide the foci of learning so as to keep a balance. If, for example, we have been to the Guggenheim exhibition and much of our learning has revolved around art and artists, then we would discuss the need to focus on another area such as science or human society, when we come to negotiate our future planning.

Children feel secure knowing their responsibilities and what is expected of them. Of course we have to be careful our expectations do not become limits or boundaries. Our children are always involved in our planning and know the stars are where our limits begin. There is a place though, for us to determine what we want them to learn or that we believe is an integral part of their knowledge development, and this is part of the responsibility of facilitating their learning. Our children respect those decisions and usually thoroughly enjoy the"imposed" area of work.

They encourage one another to reach out daily one step closer to the ultimate goal of independence and "cognitive freedom". The path will only be trod if it is secure and the reality of being "a learner equipped to learn" is seen to be worthwhile. Children are natural learners, but may never find the stars if they are too busy managing the pragmatic to lift their eyes from where they are. Being cognitively free requires courage and discipline of mind. Being a facilitator of our children's learning is having a dimension into the future, and is the greatest privilege and responsibility that parenthood bestows upon us.

DR. RAYMOND & DOROTHY MOORE

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If you wish to purchase any of these books please send a cheque or money order for the appropriate amount (all prices include postage)

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Homeschooling Records

1. A Diary
The aim of a diary is to record and hopefully reflect what you have achieved in the education of your children. It can be kept daily, weekly or less often. It can be kept by parents, children or a combination of the two. It can be kept in a couple of forms
(a) a catalogue of who did what page, of which textbook, when.
(b) a conversation about how learning was initiated where it is going and special achievements.
(c) a list of topics covered, when and why etc.
(d) a list of books, excursions, interactions and research found to be useful in presenting the learning.
Diaries can be hand-written or kept on computer, audio cassette, etc. They can contain photographs, flyers, programs and other educational material given out at events attended.

While a diary that catalogues all the textbooks covered by your children may make administrators happy, we should try to remember that our diaries are actually precious records of the unique way we choose to educate our children. Sure I can write down HBJ page 32-43 (multiplication) 20.10.92. But how much more interesting to write down "Did multiplication in the Maths book, but F. also asked about prime numbers to-day by saying "Do you know no other numbers beside 1 & 19 go into nineteen?" Then I asked if he could think of any other numbers that were like this and he spent about half an hour going through all the primes before 100. I explained they are called "prime numbers", he commented "they are pretty amazing when you think of it".

2. Photographic,Video & Audio records
Depending on your interest in technology these are useful and valid ways to record your child's learning achievements.

In any tribunal or court of law, a regularly kept , cross referenced diary is regarded as a very special piece of documentation. It can easily be verified using outside sources ("couldn't attend because of rain"; "attended the Egyptian exhibit at the Museum") and it is almost impossible to forge a detailed diary that exists over a long period of time.

3. History Most importantly, in the future, your diary if you desire it, may become a valuable testimony to the "different" mode of education you have used with your children. Providing a record for yourself, your child, researchers, educators and the comunity at large of the value of homeschooling.

Q STORES/ HOMESCHOOLERS

P.O. BOX 77 Alexandria 2015

47 BOURKE RD ALEXANDRIA

GOODS AVAILABLE

Goods for purchase will include science, craft, art, mathematics, sports & computer equipment-hardware and software, stationery, encyclopaedias, maps, desks etc. (Text books are not sold by Q stores).

WHAT IS INVOLVED

* If you wish to avail yourself of this service you must be a registered homeschooler and you must nominate an intention to deal with Q stores by filling in the form that accompanies this notice, attaching your registration certificates (all of them if you have more than one child) and sending it c/- **Q STORES P.O. BOX 77 ALEXANDRIA 2015**

* It is ILLEGAL to resell government stores or buy them for anyone else. They must be used for the educational needs of the homeschooler concerned. Orders will be monitored and abuse of this situation by any individual homeschooler will undoubtedly mean loss of the privilege for all homeschoolers.

* Q stores will make available a detailed order list for free to all homeschoolers registered with them so they can decide what they wish to purchase before the 15th December 1992 and again before the 15th May 1993.

* Orders placed with Q Stores MUST be a minimum $100. Payment must be made within 14 days from date of invoice.

*Orders you wish to make from QStores must be received by Q Stores at Alexandria before the closing dates of 30th December 1992 and 30th May 1993. Orders received after this date will not be processed until the following 6 monthly ordering.

* Homeschoolers within the metropolitan area and close to Sydney MUST collect their orders from

Q Stores' warehouse,
47 Bourke Rd
Alexandria.

* It is ALL homeschoolers' responsibility to pay for their goods within 14 days - you will receive a posted invoice. You can pick up your goods, after they are delivered to them, from the following regional contacts:

* **Bathurst** - Marcelle Foundling 063 322 132
* **Grafton** - Kerri Pothin 066 425 774
* **Moss Vale** - Sue & Will McAulay 048 681 094
* **Newcastle** - Carolyn & Carl Arthur 049 665 098
* **Quirindi** - Jim & Lyn Cherry 067 462 284

* Exact delivery date and location will be available from the contacts above. However expected delivery dates are around 30th January 1993 and around 30 th June 1993 .

* Homeschoolers must provide a copy of all their current registration certificates when they INITIALLY apply for registration with Q Stores, (but not with their orders) and undertake to inform Q stores within 14 days if homeschooling is discontinued .

* Once ordered and received goods cannot be returned.

* We have been asked to give nothing in return, nor will we be asked. However it is reiterated that it is ILLEGAL to buy these items for someone else or to resell them.

* If you wish to receive the Q stores order/price list catalogue of goods please send your name and address and register your interest, as soon as possible and preferably before the 15th November, with

Q STORES /Homeschoolers
P.O. BOX 77
ALEXANDRIA 2015 .

Q STORES REGISTRATION FORM

1. On receipt of this form Q Stores will send you, as soon as possible, their catalogue/order /price list.
2. Please return this form before the 15th November 1992 to receive the order/price list.
3. Final registrations will be taken on 15th December for those who wish to receive the order/price list.
4. If you do not register with Q Stores before 15.12.92 you will not be able to participate in the first order
5. Orders for the 1st half of the school year MUST BE in at Alexandria BEFORE 30th December 1992
6. Payment for your order will be due late January or early February.
7. Please attach photocopies of your registration certificates

SURNAME: (and initials)

NAME OF PERSON APPLYING FOR REGISTRATION:

RELATIONSHIP TO REGISTERED CHILD:

FULL ADDRESS & Postcode:

PHONE NUMBER:

NEAREST LARGE TOWN OR CITY (If outside Sydney):

NAMES & AGES OF CHILDREN

Please name the contact person or place you will use to pick up your goods

Please attach photocopies of your registration certificates for EACH of your children (this is to provide some check on the appropriateness of the volume of the order i.e. a family with one six year old does not need 5 basketballs)

Please remember if you wish to receive the Q STORES order/price list/catalogue for Jan-June 1993 you must send your registration in by 15th November 1992. The absolute cut-off date is 15th December 1992

PLEASE POST THIS COMPLETED FORM AND PHOTOCOPIES OF YOUR CHILDRENS' REGISTRATION CERTIFICATES TO

******Q STORES/ Homeschoolers******
P.O. BOX 77
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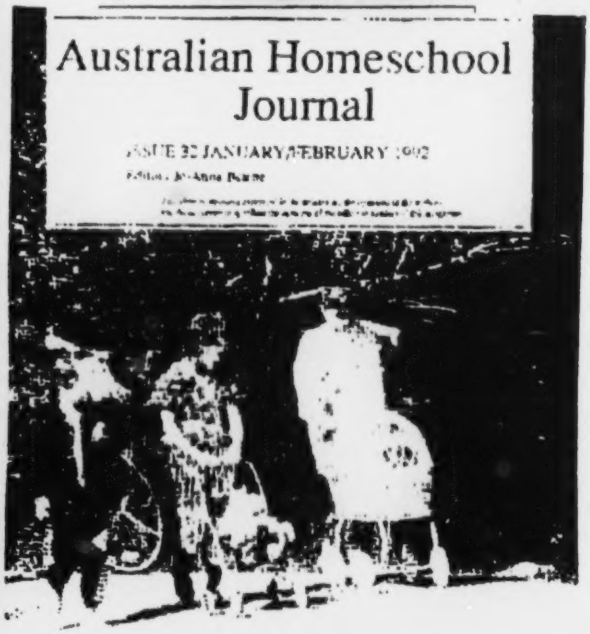
You are encouraged to inform all registered homeschoolers you know about this option

Australian Homeschool Journal

ISSUE 31 NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1991

EDITING: Jo-Anne Beirne



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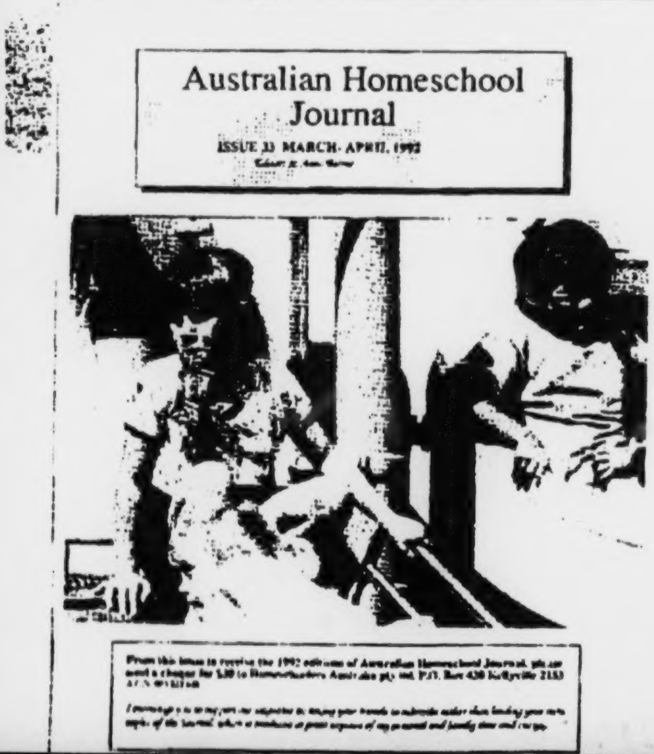

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Editor: JoAnne Beirne

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We welcome all contributions to this journal. Ideas or opinions expressed in articles are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editors and publishers of this magazine.

Please notify us of your change of address.
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Great savings for Home Educators from Apple Computers & Microsoft!

See pages 34-35

The 1993 Australian Homeschool Journal 48 pages of information at only $30 for one years subscription !!!

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Editorial

HOMESCHOOLING - BIG BUSINESS !

I think I first read it in one of John Holt's books, but of course it has been said by many others, that one of the reasons homeschooling often has to face so much criticism and challenge is because the education industry is a billions of dollars a year enterprise. If you just think of the numbers of people that are directly and indirectly employed by the education system - teachers, public servant administrators, authors of textbooks, printers and publishers of textbooks, cleaners, builders, uniform, shoe, writing implements & learning tool manufacturers you will know what I mean.

Many of us would respond by saying that the family is the most efficient and effective basic unit in our society and that spiritually and philosophically the total welfare of our own children comes before any macro economic considerations and in a democracy this is the way it should always be. However, while responding to criticism about homeschooling from academic to social, becomes easier the longer we homeschool, the really powerful criticism both political and economic lies somewhere in the future. For if a larger number of families choose the option of homeschooling, ultimately the pockets and power of some people will start to hurt sufficiently for them to decide to address the issue in a more significant way. I personally am not paranoid about this but I do think it is important to think about.

We have already seen examples of this in 1992 with the Miller article which quoted the Parents and Citizens Association & The Teachers Federation. The Teachers Fed. can see quite clearly already that homeschooling could cost them power, jobs and status. (What if unqualified parents are as successful as 4 year trained teachers?) But in reality these organisations, though very powerful, are possibly not even as dangerous to homeschooling as big and small businesses who may seek to make a quick buck or a long term killing in the homeschooling market. We must try hard to be careful not to see bogeymen making money or taking control behind each new situation we come across. But is hard to know what criteria to use to judge sincerity, not to mention competence, especially as homeschoolers are spread far and wide and do not have many means of contact as yet.

Having fallen victim to such situations on many occasions I am always trying to decide what is the best way to determine if someone or something is "ripping me off" (I hate that expression). Here are some of my rules, perhaps you have your own.

1. Have I been talked into buying this product or service or have I been told there are no other options? Am I buying this product because I think it will make an inspector, my support group, my friends, my mentor etc. happy or am I buying it because I know it will work for us?

2. Could I compile a similar product, tailoring it to the educational needs of my own child, a good deal more cheaply by applying a little research, ingenuity and energy of my own?

3. Am I sure about the background of the person/company selling this product ? What is their expertise ? Are they educators or have they homeschooled themselves or supported education and homeschooling ? Have they a resumé of themselves and their company that I could peruse ? Despite the fact that some products have a money back guarantee (many don't after a very significant outlay), or come sealed with the approval of some university, (especially American) many of them are not of as high a quality and standard as those who spend their limited and hard earned cash would hope.

4. Is the product /service exclusivist ? Does it seek to bind you to it and effectively remove you from the mainstream or marketplace? For instance, if you are told thousands of others are happily using this product or have joined an organisation can you be put in contact with those who are in your local area? If not why not? For what reason does it suggest exclusivisity ? Is it based on sound principles that you feel can be truly substantiated by the Bible or your philosophy of life and education ?

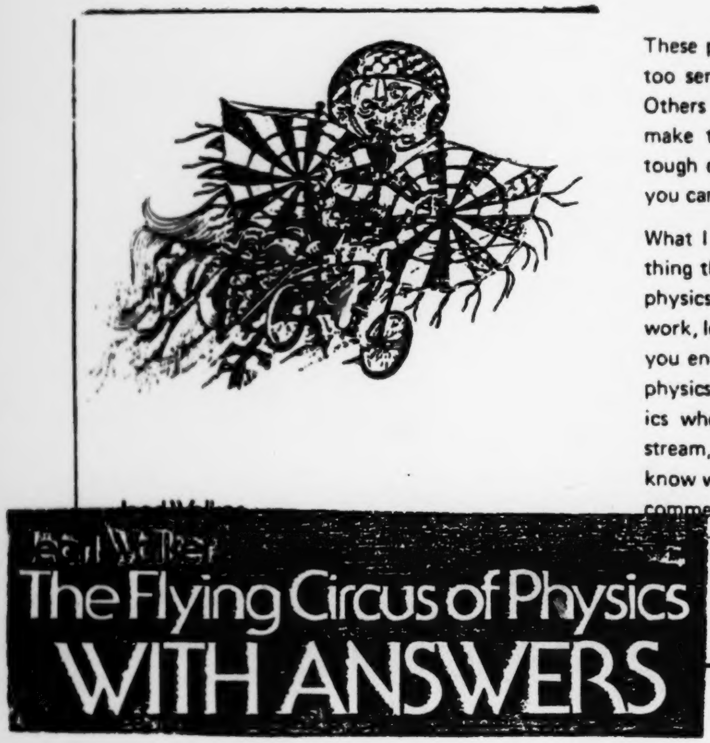
5. Have I been fooled by the advertising hype, or by the label - "Environmental", "Christian", "Bible Based", "Natural Learning" ? If the product is very expensive is there a sample I can see for a short period, if this is not a policy of the company why isn't it? Have I asked around, (for example in support groups and through newsletters), to find out how many people have found this product/service useful or useless and compared the relative cost to other things in the marketplace? Does the producer allow that an expensive product may not work for some people (refundable) ?

I know when I first started homeschooling I felt that I was out there on my own and that I had to have a crutch to lean on. Many of the crutches we "think" we need however turn out to be very expensive and very useless. There are more people, discussion groups, reviews, books and newsletters around now than ever before so at least there is some chance to avoid some of the pot holes, though I guarantee I'll fall into at least a half dozen in 1993 myself! Happy homeschooling !

THANK YOU

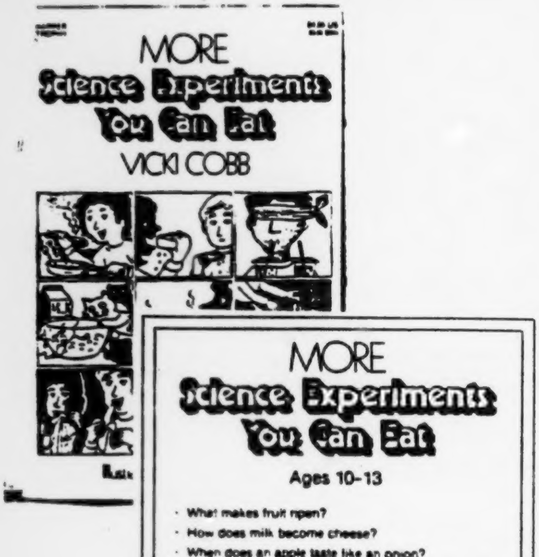
I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you all for the support and encouraging letters I receive. The job of editing the AHJ and running the John Holt Book and Music Store is not a small one and we have to dovetail the responsibilities with the home education of four precious children, working on a strong and loving family, as well as our own businesses and often it gets a little stressed. Nonetheless, we believe it has made all of us a good deal stronger and it has definitely introduced us to a whole new range of skills.

Science Resources


Jearl Walker
The Flying Circus of Physics
WITH ANSWERS

These problems are for fun. I never meant them to be taken too seriously. Some you will find easy enough to answer. Others are enormously difficult, and grown men and women make their livings trying to answer them. But even these tough ones are for fun. I am not so interested in how many you can answer as I am in getting you to worry over them.

What I mainly want to show here is that physics is not something that has to be done in a physics building. Physics and physics problems are in the real, everyday world that we live, work, love, and die in. And I hope that this book will capture you enough that you begin to find your own flying circus of physics in your own world. If you start thinking about physics when you are cooking, flying, or just lazing next to a stream, then I will feel the book was worthwhile. Please let me know what physics you do find, along with any corrections or comments on the book.* However, please take all this as being fun.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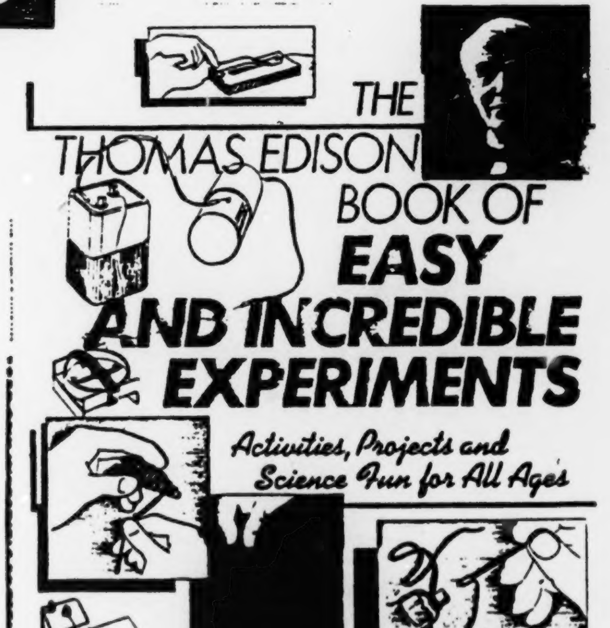
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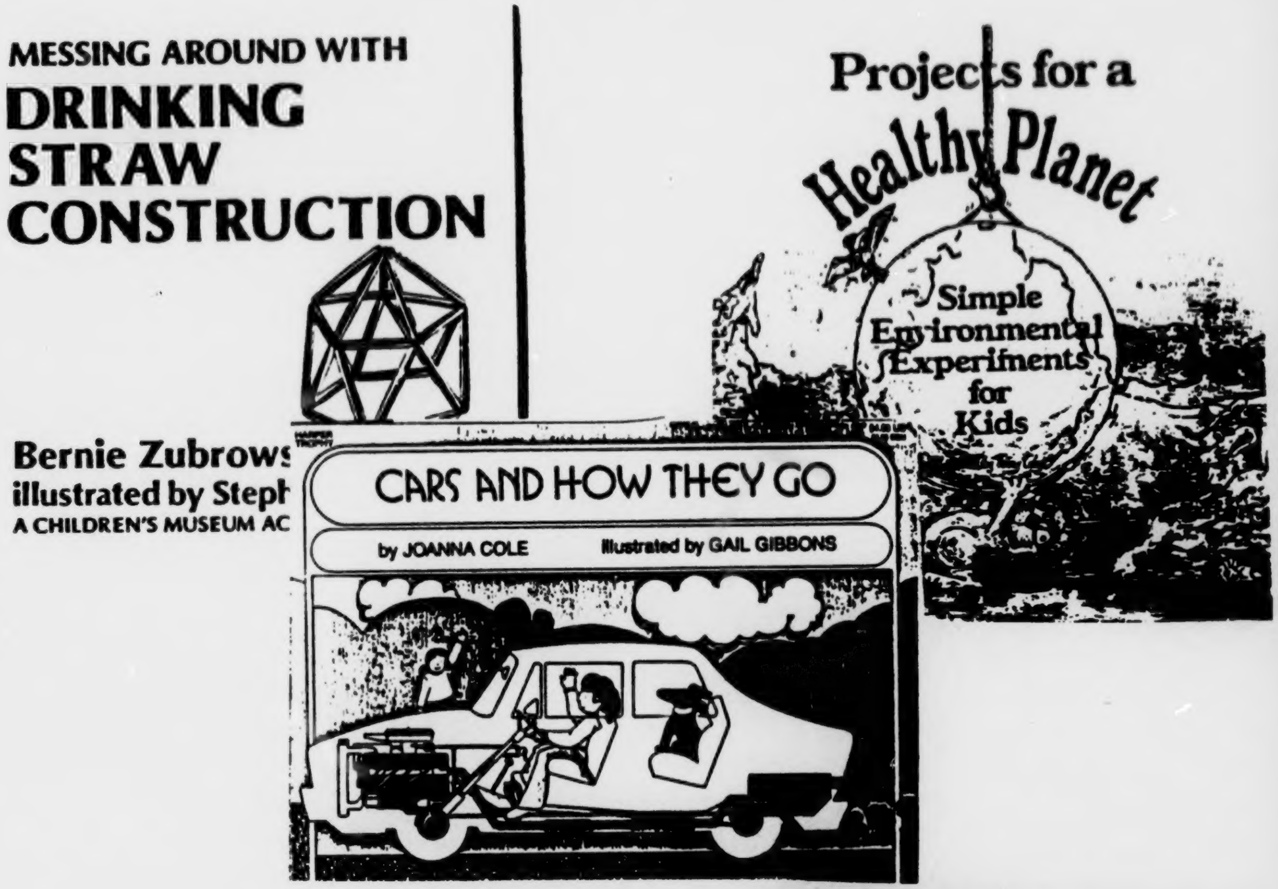
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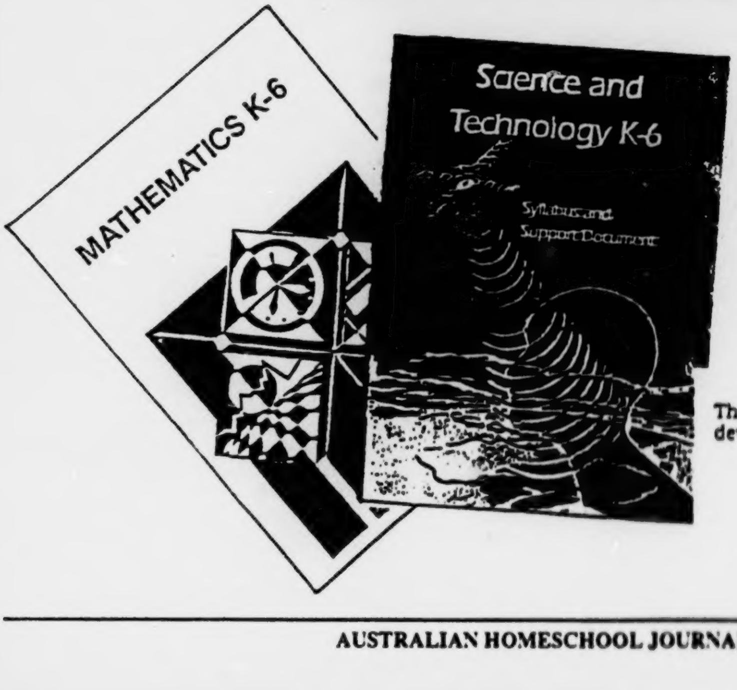
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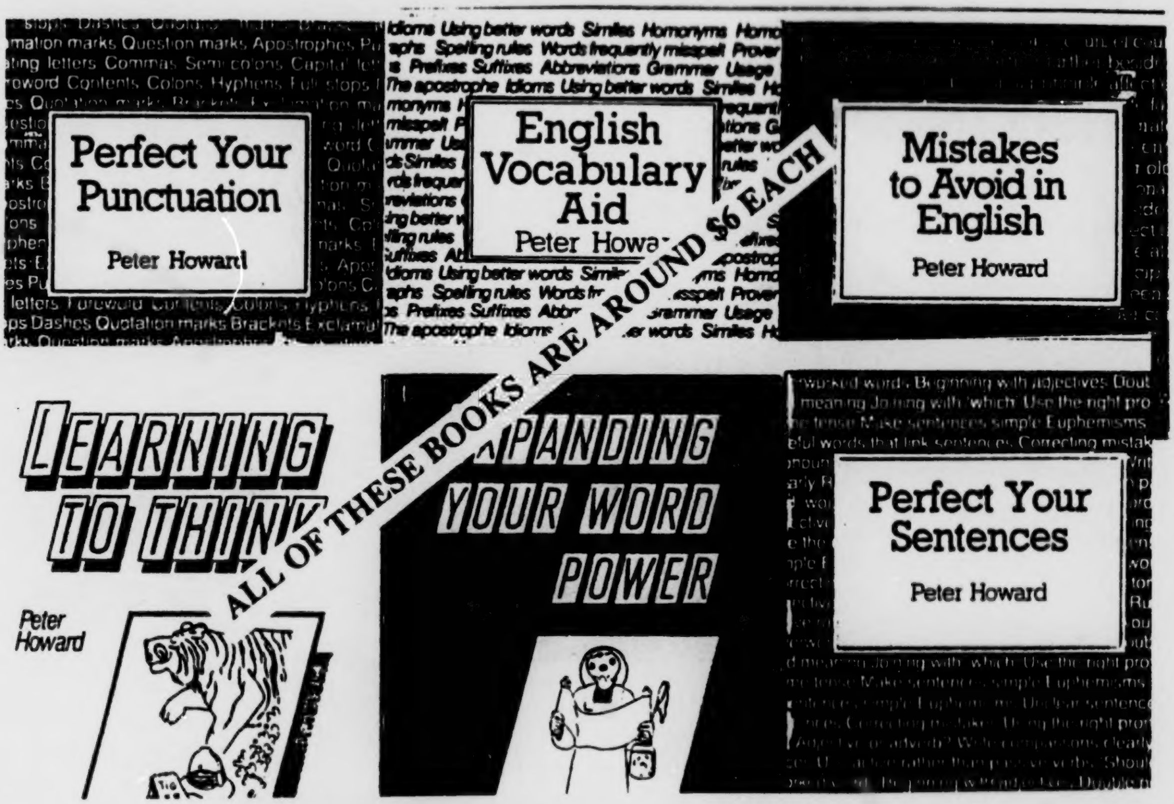
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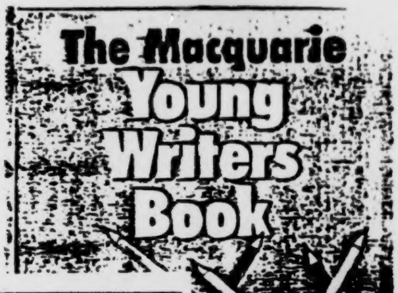
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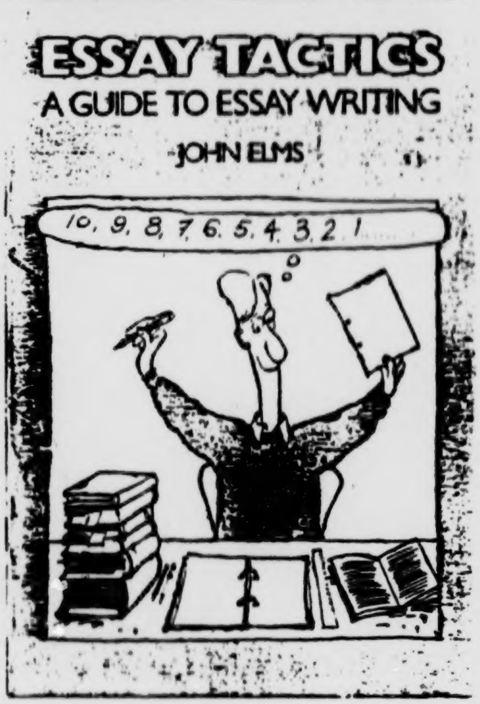
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10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1

Computer Resource Information

THE HOME COMPUTER and HOME SCHOOLING

by Bill and Anne Chalker

With the growing importance of computers in the workplace and the world at large, homeschoolers may feel it is important to recognise the necessity of providing for at least some level of computer literacy in children. The level of literacy will largely depend on the directions children take in both schooling and eventual vocations. However, today's computers and software have become so versatile that all manner of educational needs and vocational preferences can be assisted in some form or another.

To give an example of the diversity of potential use of computers in homeschooling consider the following:

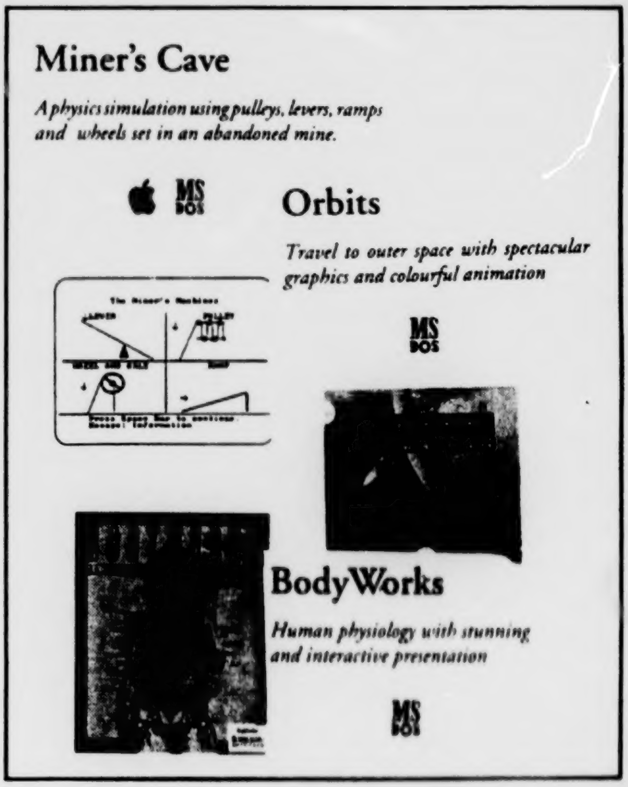
SCIENCE: In the science field the range of existing software is extraordinary. Much of the software available can make areas of learning, that might be otherwise dull or unstimulating, rich and enjoyable learning experiences. BODYWORKS (retails at about $119.95), ORBITS ($89.95) and SIMEARTH ($99.95) provide extraordinary rich and innovative educational experiences in human anatomy, the solar system and planetary evolution respectively.

MUSIC: If piano playing is your child's passion or future then MIRACLE PIANO might be the way to go. $700 is a lot of money but when you compare it to the cost of regular lessons and consider the very entertaining way the package approaches the learning of music it might seem worthwhile. This system was only viewed in the shop (Dick Smith Electronics) by way of a demonstration and my reaction was that if I had this as a child I might have got somewhere in learning piano skills.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES: The New Testament was recently brought out on a new form of software - a "megafloppy" disk - which enabled all of the New Testament to be placed on one standard 5 1/4" disk. This was an Australian innovation which provides for easy use in a desktop computer and full word search capabilities (ie. nominate a word and the computer goes looking for each occurrence of the word - an invaluable tool). This product has been readily available in newsagents at about $10. Also available at low prices are shareware software (eg. each disk may cost around $8) in religious areas eg. Bible-Q, Biblemen, Bible Study Helps, Jesus says, Bible Companion, Scripture Quest, Bible Topic Management, Bible Tutor.

STIMULATION
Part of the problem of maintaining a child's interest in a particular learning area is that of stimulation. All the good software has this in common. Areas that might otherwise leave a child bored or prone to avoiding the area altogether are made much more interesting and entertaining via the interactive nature of the programmes and the fact that they allow the user to manipulate masses of information and procedures that would otherwise be difficult if not impossible. With regard to the writing of university theses the literature searches which took days a decade or two ago can now be accomplished in minutes via the power of information retrieval systems in computer systems available in academic libraries.

The use of a computer and educational software should never be seen as an excuse to avoid the learning of basic research skills. Instead they can enhance the process. Nor should it replace the use of books. As book lovers and owners of extensive personal libraries, we are advocates of the pleasure of books. However, computers can also enrich the learning process and encourage the building book writer.



Miner's Cave

A physics simulation using pulleys, levers, ramps and wheels set in an abandoned mine.

Orbits

Travel to outer space with spectacular graphics and colourful animation

BodyWorks

Human physiology with stunning and interactive presentation

WHY BUY A COMPUTER ?

Our purchase of a home computer was prompted by:

(1) the possible educational benefits
(2) the word processing and writing capabilities
(3) computer modem communications
(4)entertainment

Everyone who is pondering the question of whether to buy a home computer or worse, which system to buy, needs to face similar questions. Do we need a computer? We can only speak from personal experience. To do so let's look at the 4 areas that originally prompted us to take the plunge.

(1) Education
We have had the benefit of quite a number of educational programmes and our children have found a lot of them to be of great value. From our own personal experience here are some of the software we found particularly good; SIMEARTH - a source of endless hours of fun and rich and complex learning experiences as planets are managed and assisted through evolutionary and environmental stages on a global scale. EZCOSMOS - an excellent tool for exploring and understanding the night sky. WHERE IN THE WORLD IS CARMEN SAN DIEGO - a fun detective game which heightens children's deductive skills and also provides for enhancing a child's global location skills in an entertaining way. BATTLE CHESS - a great way to hook kids into the game of chess, with all its attendant logic and tactical skills. ATLAS THE EDUCATOR - a cheap shareware programme with NAME THAT PLANET, MULTITIME (multiplication table drills) and HISTORAMANIA (history quiz). WORD SEARCH CONSTRUCTION KIT - spelling puzzles. EDUCATIONAL HANGMAN - spelling puzzles. CHEMISTRY LAB - an entertaining tour through elementary chemistry. MATHS TUTOR - maths skill drills at different levels. BODYWORKS - a very detailed guide to the human body presented in a very user friendly way.

(2) Word processing
Word processing provides a tremendously powerful way to write. This article was prepared on WORD 5 - an excellent wordprocessing package. Extensive changes, inserts, spelling checks etc., become easy to do, rather than laborious exercises. Desktop publishing software allows the home computer user to produce professional looking documents. We have used KEY PUBLISHER, NEWSLETTER and PRINTMASTER. These sorts of programme allow you to introduce graphics into your publishing efforts. While your child can be started off on introductory word processing packages such as WORD PROCESSING FOR KIDS, advanced packages such as WORD 5 are designed so that you can start with little advanced tutoring and learn as you go along often using incorporated help screens or tutorials. The enquiring child can pick these programmes up readily and be producing and publishing their own works in no time.

dataflow
SOFTWARE

(3) Computer modem communications
This function opens up vast opportunities for tapping into an extraordinary range of information resources that are only at the end of a phone line via the use of bulletin boards systems. I tap into a specific bulletin board covering a limited subject area, but the range of bulletin boards are almost endless. Perhaps before long we may have an Australian homeschooling bulletin board (if it hasn't already been set up somewhere?) There are many in the U.S. already.

(4) Entertainment
The range is endless and varies widely in quality. As with most recreational pursuits the parent as teacher needs to monitor and encourage the healthy recreational use of computer games. However we are often amazed in the depth of educational learning experiences that occur in many games. Like most other areas of entertainment, care should be taken in not allowing such facilities to dominate the child's life.

The home computer should never be a substitute for real life learning experiences, rather it provides a marvellous extension of them. Care should be taken to avoid utilising them as defacto baby-sitters or surrogate teachers. As with all such activities the use of computers must be supervised. The computer literacy of at least one parent is a necessity. For the uninitiated it is not as intimidating as it seems.

RESOURCES

1. Other homeschooling families, friends and relatives.

Many people are already making extensive use of home computers. They have their own sources of information on computers in general and various programmes that they use and enjoy. The Australian Homeschool Journal is happy publish reviews from homeschooling parents and teachers re various programmes.

2. Resource days featuring computers and educational software
Many Education Resource Centers (listed in your telephone book have days where computers are displayed many of the big computer companies have EXPOs of their products in the larger cities every year, watch your newspaper for details.

3. Free Catalogues
An excellent resource tool we came across recently is NEW HORIZONS - "Australia's premier National Educational computing Magazine". NEW HORIZONS (P.O. Box 658, Armidale, NSW, 2350) is a major supplier of computer software to the education system. It also supplies a reader service, advice and catalogues of major educational software supplies (Ashton Scholastic, Dataflow, Dataworks, Jacaranda, etc.). I found them to be very helpful to deal with.

4. Computer magazines
(eg. MacWorld, PC User, December, 1992) and newspaper columns (eg. Mondays Sydney Morning Herald) are frequent resources of information.

5. Budgetware Shareware
For cheap programmes. Their catalogues which often appear as inserts in computer magazines list many educational programmes covering a very broad range.

We hope that this brief overview has given you enough information to at least consider the advantages of home computing. We are certainly converts. It opens up a whole new world of extraordinary possibilities, but don't leap in blindly. Use the resources mentioned and make an informed decision. Good computing !

Homeschoolers Australia Computer Resource Day

28th March 1993

10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

* *A hands-on computer workshop where those homeschoolers parents and children, possessing computers and software will hopefully share and demonstrate the machines and packages they are using.*

Kellyville Sport and Recreation Center, Memorial Drive, Kellyville.

Bring your own lunch, your computer, your software (well marked) and $6 per family contribution to the hire of the hall.

Please ring Bill and Anne Chalker 02 484 4680 to register your interest or intention to come. WE MUST INSIST THE PEOPLE R.S.V.P. so we can have some idea of tables, chairs etc. required.

R.S.V.P. before 25th March 1993

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Mathematics Resources

The National Science and Technology Centre

QUESTACON CANBERRA AUSTRALIA

Questacon Maths Centre

The Questacon Maths Centre comprises 500 hands-on mathematics tasks which provide problem solving challenges that are fun and exciting for children from year four to year ten. The tasks come from the highly successful Campbell Mathematics Centre which popularized maths for over ten years. The Campbell Maths Centre, located in a classroom in the ACT, served thousands of school children each year and was often booked out up to a year in advance.

Some Sydney homeschoolers arranged a great afternoon at the Questacon Maths Center when it was recently on the outskirts of Sydney.

Children from 15 to 3 years atended and we had a superb afternoon with our children pondering an enormous range of very high quality Maths puzzles and games. The staff who conducted the workshop were also excellent .

It is planned that the Questacon Maths Center will be travelling all over regional Australia. You may like to find out when it is going to be near you by dialing their Toll Free Number 008 020 603 (A.C.T. 06 273 2917)

TOURING EXHIBITIONS

After they finish their time at the Centre, our exhibitions don't sit idle in Canberra. The exhibitions *Dinosaurs Alive!, IBM Mathematica, ICI Microcosm* and *OTC Double O Double 1* are visiting other science and technology centres and museums across Australia to support the hands-on approach to learning in other places.

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- Find out about the latest innovative hands-on exhibitions in Australian science and technology centres.
- Enjoy hands-on educational activity pages for children, parents and teachers.

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Library Resources

Until quite recently I was unaware that different libraries in each capital city specialise in different subject areas. Following is the list for the Sydney Region. I will publish them for the other capital cities as I receive them.

SYDNEY SUBJECT SPECIALIZATION SCHEME
SUBJECT ALLOCATIONS

CLASS NOS.	SUBJECTS COVERED	LIBRARY
000-009	Generalia, Communication, Computers	Bankstown
010-019	Bibliography	State Library
(NOTE: Subject bibliographies are allocated to subject where possible.)		
020-029	Library and information science	Warringah
030-099	Encyclopaedias, Journalism, etc.	State Library
100-199	Philosophy, Psychology	Sutherland
200-229	Religion, Bible	Hurstville
230-249	Christian theology	Concord
250-299	Christian Churches, Other religions	Hurstville
300-329	Sociology, Political Science	Randwick
330-339	Economics	Canterbury
340-359	Law, Public Administration	Waverley
360-363	Social services, Social work	City of Sydney
364-369	Crime, Prisons, Insurance, Misc. associations	Newcastle
370-379	Education	Ku-ring-gai
380-389	Commerce, Transport	Strathfield
390-399	Customs, Costume, Folklore	Willoughby
400-429	Linguistics, English language (ADULT)	Hornsby
400-429	Linguistics, English language (CHILDREN'S)	Manly
430-499	See 830-899	
500-509	Science	Wollongong
510-519	Mathematics	Gosford
520-529	Astronomy	Canterbury
530-539	Physics	Parramatta
540-549	Chemistry	Blacktown
550-569	Earth sciences, Palaeontology	Kogarah
570-573	Anthropology, etc.	City of Sydney
574-579	Biology	Fairfield
580-599	Botany, Zoology	Ryde

Note: Where Adult & Children's books are allocated to different libraries, an indication appears above.

Library Resources

CLASS NOS.	SUBJECTS COVERED	LIBRARY
600-619	Technology, Health Care and Fitness	Stanton (N Sydney)
620-621	Engineering	City of Sydney
622	Mining engineering	Wollongong
623	Military, Nautical Engineering	Rockdale
624	Civil Engineering	Camden
625	Railway, Road Engineering (ADULT)	Leichhardt
625	Railway, Road Engineering (CHILDREN'S)	Kogarah
626-628	Hydraulic Engineering	Lake Macquarie
629	Aeronautical, Automotive Engineering (ADULT)	Leichhardt
629	Aeronautical, Automotive Engineering (CHILDREN'S)	Kogarah
630-635	Agriculture, Gardening	Fairfield
636-638	Animal husbandry	Liverpool
639	Hunting & fishing industries	Sutherland
640-649	Domestic science (ADULT)	Hornsby
640-649	Domestic science (CHILDREN'S)	Manly
650-659	Business methods	Bankstown
660-661	Chemical technology (General)	Blacktown
662-668	Fuel, food, oils, gases, plastics, etc.	Blacktown
669-676	Metallurgy, timber, leather, paper, etc.	Wollongong
677	Textiles (ADULT)	Leichhardt
677	Textiles (CHILDREN'S)	Kogarah
678-679	Rubber, etc.	Parramatta
680-689	Instruments, Woodwork, Printing, etc.	Parramatta
690-699	Building	Stanton (N. Sydney)
700-709	Art	Marrickville
710-729	Area planning, Architecture	Stanton (N. Sydney)
730-749	Sculpture, Drawing, Crafts	Warringah
750-759	Painting	Marrickville
760-769	Graphic arts, Philately	Newcastle
770-779	Photography	Warringah
780-789	Music	Rockdale
790-795	Recreation, Performing arts, Indoor games	Parramatta
796-799	Outdoor sports	Ashfield

Library Resources

	CLASS NOS.	SUBJECTS COVERED	LIBRARY
	800-819	General & American literature	Ryde
	820-829	English & Australian literature	Woollahra
Language and Literature	830-838	German	Bankstown
	839	Scandinavian, etc. (ADULT)	Leichhardt
	839	Scandinavian, etc. (CHILDREN'S)	Kogarah
	839.3	Dutch	Sutherland
	840-859	French, Italian, Rumanian	City of Sydney
	860-869	Spanish, Portuguese	Waverley
	870-879	Latin (ADULT)	Leichhardt
	870-879	Latin (CHILDREN'S)	Kogarah
	880-889	Greek	Marrickville
	891.7 &) 891.85)	Russian & Polish (ONLY)	Fairfield
	890-894	Other (EXCLUDING RUSSIAN & POLISH)	Parramatta
	895-899	Afro-Asian, etc. (ADULT)	Penrith
	895-899	Afro-Asian, etc. (CHILDREN'S)	Blacktown

Note: The State Library lends foreign language books of a popular nature on bulk loan: Rule. 2.5

	900-911	History (General), Geography (General)	Burwood-Drummoyne
	912	Maps & Atlases	Wollongong
	913-919	See 930-999	
	920-929	Collective Biography, Genealogy	Rockdale

Note: Individual biographies are allocated to subject where possible: Rule 2.3

History, geography, travel	930-939	Archaeology, Ancient History	Campbelltown
	940	Europe (General ONLY), World Wars	Lane Cove
	941-942	Great Britain	Willoughby
	943-945	Germany, France, Italy, etc.	Manly
	946-949	Spain, Russia, Scandinavia, etc.	Hawkesbury
	950 952	Asia (General ONLY), China, Japan (ADULT)	Penrith
	950-952	Asia (General ONLY), China, Japan (CHILDREN'S)	Blacktown
	953-958	Middle East, India	Burwood-Drummoyne
	959	Southeast Asia, Indonesia (ADULT)	Penrith
	959	Southeast Asia, Indonesia (CHILDREN'S)	Blacktown
	960-969	Africa	Burwood-Drummoyne
	970-979	North & Central America (ADULT)	Auburn
	970-979	North & Central America (CHILDREN'S)	Blacktown
	980-989	South America	Lake Macquarie
	990-999	Pacific, New Zealand, Australia, Oceania	Mosman

LETTERS, LETTERS, LETTERS

Q STORES DELIVERY FOR GRAFTON REGION

Gary & Kerri Pothin, Sandy Beach: We were to be the Grafton delivery point for Q Stores but we have just moved from Grafton to Sandy beach (just south of Woolgoolga) so I just thought I would drop you a short line to let you know our new address and also we are still able and willing to be a drop off point for Q Stores. Our new phone number is (066) 540-372. (Our move was quite sudden and unexpected so this is why we weren't able to let you know earlier.

PREPARING FOR HOMESCHOOLING

Lindy Walters - Bowraville, NSW: Please keep sending me your excellent magazine. My little boy is 3 1/2 years old. The articles and info I've read so far are helping me to clarify and consolidate my thoughts and feelings regarding homeschooling so that by the time Eddie is old enough I should be well geared to take on the responsibility. I have two teenage daughters and though they would be called successful in Education Dept. terms, I have been far from happy with their education. Keep up the good work. I look forward to the next issue.

LEARNING THAT IS PRACTICAL AND VERBAL

Lynden Jacobi - Charlestown, NSW: I sometimes find I panic about our visits with our Home School Liaison Officer. I know I shouldn't but I become anxious about how different our ideas on learning are. I find myself afraid that he may want to see a lot of written work to prove that learning is taking place. Although we have a folder to show him, most of my child's learning takes place verbally or practically. I feel very strongly that my child is learning all he needs to know just by living with us. I wrote a fairly detailed program last year listing subjects and topics which we might cover and although we didn't use it as a guide of what to learn, it was very interesting looking at it again at the end of July and finding that we had covered at least 75% of the subjects without any "lessons" whatsoever. Since then we have covered even more but I still panic at the thought of explaining all this! I kept a diary last year and although it wasn't very detailed, it was suggested that I shorten the entries to just include the subjects we covered each day. I now realise that without work sheets the diary doesn't look very impressive. I also found it almost impossible to keep it up. I have to go now. I hope all is well with you and your family. Looking forward to hearing from you soon.

A BOOK ABOUT TESTING

Virginia E. McCullough, 1759 West Berteau, Chicago, Illinois 60613, (312)327-8096: I thought that you and the members of your organisation would like to know about the book, Testing and Your Child, recently released by New American Library (NAL). meant as a handy resource book for parents, medical practioners, teachers, psychologists and other interested people. Developmental and psychological tests are profiled along with many well-known educational tools.

READERS THAT USE A PHONETIC APPROACH

Philip O'Carroll - Nth Fitzroy, Victoria

We at Fitzroy Community School have long been involved in homeschooling in Victoria. We are one of the very few alternative schools to have survived the 70s. Many homeschooling families have spent time with us. We were strongly involved in the (successful) campaign against the diabolical "Out of School" Education Act they tried to introduce in Victoria last year.

The reason I am writing to you is that we have created a new set of READERS for children, which we believe many homeschoolers would want. As you probably know there are changing fads within the school industry as to how subjects should be taught. And while a fad is "in", it tends to be slavishly followed throughout the system - until it is deemed to be "out". The current fad as regards teaching reading is the LOOK & SAY method, where no attempt is made to be aware of the SOUNDS of the letters involved. Our readers are based on the PHONETIC approach - coupled of course with the Look & Say learning of "special" (non-phonetic) words. Now there are many arguments for and against both approaches. Now there are many arguments for and against both approaches. But the most powerful argument is the results. We have tried various approaches and have had most success with the Phonetic. Many homeschoolers use a phonetic approach.

Our Founding Principal, Faye Berryman, has gradually written over our 16 years, FIFTY different little stories - generally enlightening in themselves - covering each of the main sound types in the English language. We have spruced up the lettering and the drawings and cohered the readers into a complete system (some samples herein).

Our little school has done very well with these readers. Apart from routinely high praise for our students at their various secondary schools, we won the 1992 Australia-wide Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Competition (Small Schools Section) and have twice won the Australia wide ATOM Video Screenplay Award (Primary). many teachers from State, Catholic and Independent schools have been grateful to get hold of copies of our readers. The titles range from A FAT CAT to THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON. There are 5 packs of readers called prep, one, two, three & four. The cost for each pack is $29.95. Postage is free in NSW. If you would like more information please contact Fitzroy Programs, 597-599 Brunswick St., Nth Fitzroy 3068, Aust. Ph:(03)489-5700, (03)489-5460 FAX:(03)482-3226

TANDY STORES - A GOOD RESOURCE

Roz Lazar, Bathurst: I wanted to let you know of a resource we found recently. Tandy stores stock an excellent and relatively inexpensive supply of kits; Science and Physics experiments, electric circuits, etc. The Physics kits were about $40-50 with about 280 experiments. The electric circuit was on special for $20 (normally $40). We find them great!

NOW WE'RE HOMESCHOOLING

Elizabeth Bartley, Lemon Tree Passage, NSW : Thank you for your AHJ. We really enjoy reading it. We were registered for home schooling by Trevor Swan on November 6. Kristopher is eight years old and loves learning in this atmosphere, having been in a private school until now. Kristopher has been labelled learning disabled so we decided patience, love and repetitive lessons are what he needs. We found Trevor Swan very supportive and understanding. He told us he's only a phone call away if we have any problems. he gave us a two year registration. Thanks again for your magazine. We'll look forward to the next issue.

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN FAMILY WANTS CONTACT

Beverley Paine, Yankalilla, SA: We are a family of five wanting to make contact with others with similar goals and ambitions. We've spent some time heavily involved in trying to make a K-7 graded class an ideal educational environment, so we've seen education from a school view. We've also home educated full and part time, and feel nothing beats learning at home. We have 4 1/2 acres near the coast, about an hours drive to Adelaide. We are trying to develop it into a permaculture farm, in addition to building our own home. We're trying to make the break from traditional consumer lifestyle to a more humble, earth friendly lifestyle which is kinder to body and soul. It's hard work as our will power isn't the best. We are not "religious" in the traditional sense, just open minded and willing to accept everyone and value them for who they are. Spirituality for us is very personal for the individual. Our children are aged 6, 10 and 12 and we are 34. We'd love to hear about your experiences. Please write to: Beverley, P.O. Box 371, Yankalilla, SA 5203

CENTRAL QUEENSLAND HOMESCHOOLING GET TOGETHER

Central Qld Get-Together, 1993: Anyone interested in a Home Educating Families' Camp from 7-14 June, 1993, near Emu Park, Qld, please contact Kathy Boles, 2 Richard St., Emu Park, Qld, 4702, Ph:(079)396-213. Please enclose non-refundable deposit of $5.00. Accommodation is at the same venue as our highly successful 1992 get-together, a church camp close to the beach, 3 km from Emu Park. It has a kitchen-dining-meeting building and a sleeping quarters building. Emu Park is a small seaside town 45 km from Rockhampton and about 700 km north of Brisbane. Cost: $5 per person per night or $15 per family per night max or $2 per day visitor. Babies and toddlers no charge. No Particular Curriculum or Method. The aim is to get to know and to support each other and to have a good time.

SONLIGHT MATERIALS

(No name) Cooranbong, NSW: We really appreciate the information you shared with us at your recent Morisset Seminar, and we are looking forward to reading your articles in the Journal. Last week I went to a Sonlight Resource Centre - Homeschooling Seminar, and I was disappointed with their attitude toward both Public and Private Schools, and their recommendation not to register with the Government as Homeschoolers. I believe it is people like this that have a very unbalanced view of education and make it difficult for those who are genuinely trying to seek a better education for their children.

N.S.W. HOMESCHOOLER WANTS CONTACT

Sonja Brady, Bowraville NSW: After considering different approaches in the education of our only daughter, Miriam (she's five years old and a happy, delightful child), we decided to apply ourselves to the responsibility of giving Miriam a natural home schooling. We are fortunate to live on 25 acre rainforest - a peaceful environment with the opportunity to witness ecological wonders and natural developments firsthand. Miriam enjoys the company of children very much, but in this respect we are quite isolated. Therefore we would welcome any contact from other home schoolers in NSW. We are situated on the Mid North coastal interland only 15 minutes to the beach. Our property bounds directly onto State forest. I imagine many home schooling families would enjoy the exchange of ideas and the chance to let the kids see, smell and handle Australia's wonderful nature. If any interested reader of your journal wants more information please write to: James & Sonja Brady, P.O. Box 113, Bowraville, NSW 2449 or call (065)695-505.

READERS' LETTERS & YOUNG CHILDREN

Mary Collis, Blacktown NSW. It's a great journal and seems to be getting better all the time. One thing I missed in the last two issues - the readers' letters about things they liked in the AHJ and what they're doing at home regarding education. Also, could you possibly consider for a future issue some ideas homeschooling parents use with toddlers. For example, do they do daily craft with them or just let them roam about outside? Did/do your watch PlaySchool, Humphrey Bear, etc. What are your thoughts on this? What about Play Group? Your philosophy and how does it apply to these things? I often wonder if I should be doing more (or less) and have little I know of to follow the example of. An article and some recommended reading would be fantastic.

NSW EX- HOMESCHOOLER COMMENTS

I'm not homeschooling any more. I almost became an emotional and mental wreck from the constant pressure. My husband never supported me, only to say yes I could do homeschooling. I lasted 3 years. I'm not happy with the public school system at all. I see children being uneducated daily, growing up to be juvenile delinquents because they aren't helped properly. I believe phonics is the only way to go and of course I get hardly anywhere with that idea with State-trained teachers. Our boys were on ACEprogram which I really liked. It's far more learning orientated than schools. I am trying to give them extra work from ACE at home but it's a battle. My husband isn't in favour of this - only school homework. I never did well in school and I do not want that for my children. It really bothers me to see so many children being passed onto the next class without learning or understanding what they have been taught. I found it difficult homeschooling out here because of no one else actually homeschooling near me. People do not like change or different ideas and I received no support from my family at all. I borrowed some homeschooling books but I found that they really didn't help my situation. Our boys were always fighting and I ended up always spanking them trying to keep some sort of peace, which I felt was actually hurting them. So I've got the "system" on one side saying they're right and homeschoolers on one side saying we're right, and also Christians agreeing with the "system". I have read articles from different magazines about negative socialisation at school. When I read your magazine and see all these different groups of homeschoolers it's exciting. Mr. Gollan (of ACE) said that there are 1,100 families on ACE alone in 1992.

ANOTHER NEW HOMESCHOOLER !

Wendy Smillie, Oberon, NSW: Following the article in Sunday's paper about you and your children, I contacted Phillip Koch so that I could make contact with you. I am in the process of taking our children out of the school system, and I've been unable to make contact with anyone in NSW who is actually legally teaching their children at home. As you would probably understand, I'm really in need of some advice, particularly in regard to the law, and how to go about having an application to "home school" our children approved. I am reasonably confident that we can do the rest, but at present the Education Department looms large as far as obstacles go! We have two children, 14 and 11 and we are no longer prepared to delegate responsibility for their education, or their future to a system which is just not measuring up. I realise that we will probably get only one chance and we want to be as well-prepared as possible before making application. Looking forward to hearing from you.

BE SURE WHO YOU ARE FOLLOWING

Susan Warner, Greenmount, WA: It has occurred to me that most people are happy to be dictated to by others. If not by the Government, their parents, their peers, society, their financial situation, their boss, their drug, their preacher, pastor or guru, their dream, clairvoyant, or mentor, then they will enslave themselves to their own desires.

I too am a slave. My master is the most Supreme, and I am very grateful to Him for allowing even me to be His servant. All my life I have heard all kinds of religious controversy being discussed by those around me, and watched people being misled by other people in the name of Christianity. I've also been misled myself by people on several occasions. Fortunately, the Truth has usually been revealed every time I have had the desire to learn it; and especially when I have looked in the most famous book ever written, the Bible. In my experience people will go to all kinds of lengths to convince others that their ideas, logic, opinions, etc. are correct and in their effort to convince they resort to using Scripture, secular history, statistics, church history, name dropping, etc.

The more gifted of these people will gather a following of supporters, believers or whatever and this gives them some power. Power corrupts. Human beings will build up their own empires with the use of more of their persuasive actions. Even well meaning individuals can be caught in the trap of pursuing their own interests in an attempt to do good for others. Recently I have met several people who believe the Bible and try to live according to the will of God. These are honest, well meaning good individuals. I am convinced however that when we talk we must quote the Word of God. And when we do quote Scripture, it must not be taken out of context or distorted to reflect some person's thoughts, opinions, etc. I do not believe that I have any answers, but I do believe that God has all the answers. Whenever anyone quotes Scripture or anything else to me, I check it out for myself. Do you know why? Because I don't trust anyone except God. And He says "...work out your own salvation..."(Philippians 2:12). To me one of the saddest things that has happened is the way the church has been split up into several denominations, groups, etc., which oppose each other and do what they can to prove that that each other group is no good.

They all profess to use the same book as the basis for their criticism of each other butI believe we have to be very careful about this. Perhaps their ambition is to build up their own or maybe someone else's empire; but is it God's? Many of the people I have been in contact with recently have been scared by information about the advent of a one World Government, and banking organisations taking over our country along with the rest of the world, etc. These people are living in fear of the authorities governing our land. As a result some are so disgusted and hateful towards our government that they are not cooperating, communicating, nor even interested in finding out about where they stand according to the laws of the land. These people believe that they are abiding by God's laws. However, there is plenty of evidence in the Bible showing the wisdom in knowing the laws of the land, and communicating with and especially for (in prayer) the governing authorities. In the Book of Acts where we can read about the life and trials of Paul, we can see how he got himself out of many a tricky predicament because he knew the laws of the land and was acquainted with many of the people in power.

To his advantage also, of course, was his knowledge of God's Laws; both those which applied before the death of Christ and those which apply according to His New Will and Testament. It is crazy to think that anyone who believes he is a Christian would be afraid of the people who govern our land or any other people. But it seems there are many Christians who are indeed afraid of mere men. How sad, especially when all we need to do for reassurance is open the Scriptures. (Don't believe me. Look in your own Bible!)

Read Titus 3:1-2 "remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be uncontentious, gentle, showing every consideration for all men." and Romans 13:1-4 "Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God: and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behaviour, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same: for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices lawlessness." Judges 3:7 describes in gory detail what can happen when God's people prefer to learn from other men/idols than from Him. God allowed the ungodly King Eglon of Moab to rule His people for 18 years. The best stories are in my favourite book !

Homeschooling the Older Child

Jo-Anne Beirne

Many well meaning people have told me on many occasions that homeschooling the older child if not impossible is downright educationally dangerous. They say "It is O.K. to teach your children to read, write and calculate at the primary level as most parents could handle that competently. But what about the older child, who has already learned more about maths than you ever knew, and now wants to know about biology, politics and the history of the Middle East. How are you possibly going to teach things outside your knowledge base and understanding?"

Fortunately the problem is not as onerous as often imagined. Contrary to popular opinion educators no longer feel that humans are merely empty vessels or blank pages waiting to be filled or written upon. Parents contemplating educating the older child need not fear that their lives will be one long drudge from the well of knowledge to the open mouthed child hoping to pour most of it in. Homeschooling is empowering the family, the children and the parents. It is understanding that children can and do take an active role in the learning process even in such an unsupportive environment as the classroom. Your older, or gifted child or teenager, can be trusted with much of the responsibility for their learning.

DEMYSTIFYING EDUCATION

There is no big mystery in the education process. The books used by schools are NOT kept in a safe somewhere with a sign attached that says "only for use of teachers and education professionals". Everything available for the use of students in schools, and MUCH MORE besides, is freely available in the community from hundreds of shops, universities, people and libraries. In fact most school books, unlike real books, are conveniently written in the simplest possible form as they are aimed at children, who it is presumed know nothing. It is no big deal to get the books, read them and learn along with your child or just ahead of them. It doesn't require any great intelligence or achievement, just some devotion and application to the task.

SELF-TAUGHT

Computers are a wonderful example of the ability of an interested user to access and utilise information they need. You could not force a child, as part of a school program, to

"The child who attends public school typically spends approximately 1,100 hours a year there, but only 20% of these - 220 hours- are spent , as the educators say, "on task". Nearly 900 hours, or 80%, are squandered on what are essentially organizational matters."
Homeschooling For Excellence by David & Micki Colfax p. 46 (Warner Books, 1988)

" There are seven big fat chapters in this book which tell you how to study all the school subjects without school. They can help you both learn things you are already interested in and help you discover intellectual information that you never thought you were interested in."
The Teenage Liberation Handbook: How to quit school and get a real life and education by Grace Llewellyn p.136-262 (Lowry House)

One of the greatest shortcomings of the schools seems to be their gross inflexibility when it comes to teaching a subject or skill. Teachers present the material in one way- usually through some combination of lectures, blackboard lessons, textbooks and worksheets - and if children don't get it, then it's their problem, not the teachers'. But as we've seen children learn in a number of ways and need to be taught their way if it is going to sink in. Let's explore how you can create an optimum learning environment in your suited to your child's particular learning needs."
Learning in Their Own Way: Giving Children at Home What They May Not Be Getting at School by Thomas Armstrong p 56 (Jeremy P. Tarcher)

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read boring old computer manuals, even if you promised them a distinction or even some monetary award. But put a child in front of their beloved computer with a new and interesting program and they will soon be pouring over the information in the manual with much healthy attention to detail.

ADVANTAGES OF HOMESCHOOLING

When developing a home study program for your older child you are benefitted by one to one, or at least small group tuition. It is going to be a lot easier to cover a broader range of material or particular topics in greater depth and with much more speed and flexibility than is possible in the school system. Some rules to remember are to tease out what is important knowledge and what is busy work and eliminate the second. If your educational program becomes too stultifying and provides no challenges for your older student - change, grow, investigate, find new areas to explore and learn about.

HOW WILL YOU MAKE YOUR OLDER CHILD ATTEND TO THEIR LESSONS ?

This statement is frequently heard and I feel that it should be of concern to our educators that schoolwork is seen as punishment and schools are seen as prisons. We need to recognise some children do in fact often need to be "deschooled". This means they have to realise that schooling at home is not prison at home and be given the space and time to have the love of learning, that may have been effectively removed by the school system, reemerge. This can be facilitated by careful and intelligent negotiation, thus retaining the spirit of any regulations or guidelines that are required in your state.

LONG TERM HOMESCHOOLERS

If you have been homeschooling your children long term, homeschooling them through high school just becomes a natural extension of what you have always been doing. You know about their learning and how it works and how you can best facilitate it. You have seen their self-motivated learning and it is only a matter of staying tuned in to newer and more interesting ways of pursuing learning in an ever broader arena.

WARNING

Past experience has shown that it is very important that both the parent and child are keen on the idea of homeschooling. It is extremely hard to home educate a child who wants to be in school. It does not matter how strong and determined the parent, it ends up being a very unhappy situation. So if you are taking a child out of school please make it a decision by both parties.

A concern among many homeschoolers with older children is the teenage years and the transition into adulthood after a life somewhat suspended from the mainstream. Does the philosophy of living each day to the fullest, rather than of constantly preparing for the next test or for college entrance exams, make as much sense for our teenagers as it did for our blossoming young children ? Looking at the homeschooled teens that I know I cannot help but think that it does. Our homeschooled teens have benefited enormously from the wide variety of experiences we provide for them. Both their growth and sense of direction have been enhanced. I remember when my daughter Britt was fourteen, she was writing a weekly puzzle column for our weekly magazine and selling articles to ***Mother Earth News*** *. People asked her if she planned to be a writer when she grew up, and she would say, in the most unassuming manner, "I am a writer". At fourteen, this answer was accurate; it reflected where Britt was at that time. Now that she is nearing eighteen, when asked the same question, Britt ponders over it and truly wonders about her adult life. Similarly, being applauded and lauded for her piano playing at eleven was very different from now considering making piano playing her life's work."*

An excerpt from 'The Homeschooled Teenager Grows Up' by Penny Barker p 203 printed in Schooling At Home: Parents, Kids and Learning (John Muir Publications)

Homeschooling has sometimes been thought of as something that keeps children separate from lots of peers and prevents peer pressure (it does, to some extent), but basically homeschooling opens up a person's opportunities for interaction and helps people to learn to interact in a society where we seem to have few good friendships, partly because people are labelled and categorised and put into boxes. This seems like a dangerous thing to have happen and somehow, as homeschoolers, we have to take on some responsibility for changing it. Human beings are meant to be integrated, not kept in boxes by age or other categories. But in order for integration to occur, children need to be given more respect and trust than they receive to-day.

By an 18 year old homeschooler, Ms Kaseman in Learning Every Day p. 79 Taking Charge Through Homeschooling - Personal and Political Empowerment . (Koshkonong Press)

PATIENCE

Remember adolescence can be a trying time of life, both for the youngster trying out new and unfamiliar emotions, and for the family learning to cope with and understand them. Patience and tact are necessary. Adolescence is the age of trial and error. It's trying on being an adult while not being quite ready to give up being a child. Parents recognise that this young person is an individual, and due the respect you would give any other individual. It's important that their unique interests be acknowledged, and that they can be and wish to be, actively involved in their own educational decision making. Ask them what they want to learn - and why. Then use their interests, needs for now and hopes for the future, to develop a suitable learning program and means of evaluation. Discussion, reading, research and negotiation must play an important role here. There is a wide range of people and material in the community and on homeschooling resource lists, some of which needs to be explored and considered when developing a meaningful and useful educational program for older homeschoolers. Like all children, teenagers want to read, write and create but they also want to see, touch and experience a broad range of learning and become involved in real learning work.

A resourceful commitment to homeschooling the older child will provide great benefits for the parent and child in all areas of their lives both academically and socially.

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What is Smart ?

Alan Gartenhaus

We are all different; and it is presumptuous, even wrong, to expect that others will necessarily make the same discoveries or draw the same conclusions we have.

As an educator working in museums, I often introduced young people to art. Of the many tours I conducted, I recall one most clearly. It involved a group of third graders and a larger than life sized portrait by John Singer Sargent.

The portrait was of a woman named Mrs. Wertheimer. The painting hung in the museum's entrance hall, about three feet off the floor. The image of Mrs. Wertheimer stood over six feet tall, making her an imposing figure who looked down imperiously at all who approached.

Mrs. Wertheimer had lived during the 19th century and was a person of obvious wealth and status. Her posture was erect; her bearing, regal. She wore an elaborate white dress and an abundance of jewelry. Among the many possessions adorning her, the one most likely cherished above all others was a large cameo brooch. It seemed to be the focus of the painting. Everything called attention to it. Her arms formed lines leading you to it, her pearl necklaces encircled it, even the light seemed to shine most brightly upon it.

To demonstrate how artists direct our attention to certain areas of their work, I decided to play a little game with the students. I had them approach this painting with their backs turned toward it. The children enjoyed the silliness of walking backwards, and some laughed out loud. As they quieted down, I told them I would count to three and ask them to spin around, look at the painting, and name the first thing they saw."One, two, three," I said as I, too, spun around to look at Mrs. Wertheimer and her magnificent brooch. A split second later, I heard a chorus of voices. "Her feet! Her feet!" they cried. My immediate reaction was confusion, then I dropped down to their eye level. Indeed, it was true; the first thing they could have seen was her feet.

Expecting the Unexpected

I learned an important lesson that day: one must not presume uniformity of thought. We each approach things from our own vantage point. We are all different; and it is presumptuous, even wrong, to expect that others will necessarily make the same discoveries or draw the same conclusions we have. Our dissimilarities run the gamut from our physical relationship to things, to our personal or cultural patterns of thinking. Andthe differences can be profound.

Published in Mothering Magazine Fall 1991

Teachers and parents who would constrain or define children' thinking skills using a single standard, such as academic grades or standardized testing, make an error similar to the one I made regarding Mrs. Wertheimer. Too often, we adults presume that thinking and perception should follow a single point of view and that to be correct, children must arrive at a predictable answer using a prescribed method.

This narrow view of thinking and intelligence does young people a grave disservice, and robs society of a precious resource - intellectual diversity. A narrow viewpoint discounts the variety of forms that intelligence takes. It discourages intellectual curiosity and the testing of new or different ideas in favour of playing it safe. It can also diminish individual creativity, the thinking process by which individuals generate their own alternatives, options, new ideas, and unique solutions.

Types of Thinking

Though many problem-solving activities require *convergent* thinking - an ability to focus thoughts while selecting a correct response from a range of possibilities- some demand *divergent* thinking- an ability to generate a range of possibilities in order to make a considered, or better, decision. For instance, computing the distance between two points on an automobile trip is a convergent task; deciding what to bring along for the ride is a divergent one.

While convergent thinking dominates most school activities and tests, divergent thinking is often given short shrift. Divergent problems require additional time for thinking through ideas and then testing them. Such problems are less predictable, often crossing the artificial boundaries established by academic subject areas. They are also more difficult to evaluate, as subjective criteria must be considered.The neglect of divergent thinking, however, can result in an imbalance, leaving imaginativeness, inventiveness, and decision-making skills underdeveloped or even damaged. Teachers and parents who disregard divergent thinking also fail to convey an understanding of, and an appreciation for, individual and cultural differences.

As critics of the so called Back to Basics movement in education have noted, excessive emphasis on predetermined outcomes may actually inhibit the learning process. Long term retention may be lost to short term memorization. True understanding may be discounted in favour of simple recall in preparation for passing the next test. The outcome: passing courses whose lessons cannot be remembered or used.

A disproportionate emphasis on being "correct" also lessens intellectual risk taking, which is the pathway toward new and better solutions. It is difficult, if not impossible, to try out untested ideas under the looming presence of evaluations based on"right" or "wrong" responses. Learning environments that rely on such techniques limit discovery through trial and error, and ultimately interfere with the ability to integrate failure into the building blocks of success.

Educational methods based on having "the right answer" teach that correct answers are good and incorrect answers are bad. This value is deeply embedded in the incentive system used in most schools.Right over 90 percent of the time = A. Right over 80 percent of the time = B. Right over 70 percent of the time = C. Right over 60 percent of the time = D. Less than 60 percent, you fail.Young children exposed to this system learn early on to be right as often as possible, and to keep to a minimum any efforts that might result in mistakes.

Defining Smart

Difficulties are sure to arise when trying to pigeonhole what, or who, is smart. If being smart refers to mastering established academic achievement, how do we account for context? Is it not true that being street smart can be more valuable in some situations than being book smart? And if being smart means being correct, why is being politically savvy sometimes more important than being right?

If being smarter denotes knowing more facts, then we must wonder, is it truly more important to know the names and dates of World War II battles than to understand the war's causes and consequences? Certainly, if being smarter is thought of as being better able to use one's mental abilities for problem solving, then it must be as essential to generate ideas and alternatives (divergence) as it is to use logic in choosing between them (convergence).

Should we agree that being smart has something to do with a brain that functions exceptionally well, then we must conclude that "smart" can take many forms. One, surely, is the general intellectual model of intelligence stressed in most classrooms, which involves the talent to understand and learn most subjects with ease, and to use logic and remember well. Others might include the following:

* **Specific academic aptitude,** which helps a person excel in a single subject area while remaining average in most everything else
* **Psychomotor skills,** or the brain's ability to command the body to perform physical activities exceptionally well
* **Artistic ability,** the capacity to translate thought and emotion through painting, dancing, music, or other art forms
* **Leadership skills,** the facility to inspire, shape, or speak on behalf of public opinion.
* **Creativity,** the ability to generate ideas or inventive thoughts while seeking out new insights, relationships, and solutions
* **Wisdom,** the capacity to judge the soundest course of action based on knowledge, experience, and understanding.

Achieving Balance

While many children who test well do understand and learn with ease, others simply have very good memories. Some of today's more "successful" students have abandoned their own thinking abilities in favour of memorizing or parroting information and behaviour patterns imposed by the educational system. Other students rated among "the brightest" show little evidence of generating any creative thoughts on their own.

Skewed emphasis on convergent thinking and arriving at predetermined answers has make knowing the correct response more important than understanding the information or how to use it. As a result, students have become "obsessed with getting the right answers on tests, and weak at analyzing what they are learning and at grasping implications." Educators worry that "these weaknesses will affect the students' ability to make future decisions about career and marriage, what candidates to vote for, and what products to buy." Some might also wonder about their ability to make future childrearing decisions.

Several concerned educators propose eliminating the reliance on standardized testing, thereby reducing a teacher's tendency to "teach to the test rather than to the student." Others, such as Robert Sternberg, IBM Professor of Psychology and Education at Yale University, call for revamping the tests. Sternberg says that well-designed tests can measure, and thus inspire value and appreciation for, a variety of forms of intelligence, including analytical, creative, and practical thinking abilities. In fact, the College Entrance Examination Board has recently announced a series of changes designed for its Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) the first set of radical changes since the 1920s. Modifications will include devoting a substantial portion of the examination to interpretation by adding both written essay and open-ended math questions to the traditional multiple-choice format. The changes, scheduled to go into effect in 1994, acknowledge the essential importance of divergent thinking skills, and address charges that the test's current multiple choice answers reflect cultural and gender biases.

Indications are that a mix of thinking activities is an urgent need of our times. Young people require practice in wrestling with both convergent and divergent questions. Exposure to the full spectrum of problem solving, at home and at school, would promote not only a healthier balance of thinking skills, but also encouragement and a sense of worth to children who are smart in ways other than those conventionally reinforced.

Developing minds ought to be challenged. Children need to use their imaginations ant to actively participate in solving problems. They also need to experience learning situations in which evaluation is suspended, in which attempts are as valued as results. Most importantly, children need to be and feel appreciated for their own unique blend of thinking aptitudes, rather than denigrated for not excelling within a prescribed mold.

Walter Lippmann, journalist and author, is credited with saying, *"Where all think alike, no one thinks very much." In a participatory democracy that embraces scientists, surgeons, musicians, mechanics, judges, jurors, entrepreneurs, electricians, athletes, architects, actors, and astronauts, can we afford to see it any other way?*

Alan Gartenhaus (39) is a writer and education consultant to museums and school systems throughout the USA former education specialist for the Smithsonian Institution and curator of education at the New Orleans Museum of Art. He has written the book Minds in Motion: Using Museums to Expand Creative Thinking available from Caddo Gap Press, 1411 West Covell Blvd. Davis, WA.

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A Homeschool Program

A HOMESCHOOL PROGRAM THAT WAS APPROVED IN THE SYDNEY REGION IN 1992 FOR A SIX YEAR OLD.

(Editor's note: The written component of a program is only one part of the approval for registration which includes interaction with the parent and child and other combinations of evidence.)

EXPLANATION: This program has been designed to meet the educational needs of our son. Our belief is that all knowledge is linked and is easier to grasp when learned within a context, we have therefore, chosen to use a natural learning method in the belief that he will continue to enjoy learning in this way.

ENGLISH OBJECTIVES

* To instil in .... a love and understanding of the English language in all its forms.

* To provide him with the skills to enjoy it to the full including, reading, writing, speaking, spelling and conversing fluently, confidently and with clarity.

STRATEGIES

We will achieve these objectives in the following ways:

*By continuing to read to him daily from works of fiction and non-fiction as well as the various other forms of writing including poetry.

* By continuing to take .... to the library frequently to select books on topics related to his current interests and to help develop additional ones. This will involve him in computer searches for appropriate materials.

* By encouraging and helping him to write short stories based on his own experiences and imagination.

* By helping him to learn to use a dictionary to the levels of his ability.

* By continually encouraging him to listen to the way language is used by others and to converse frequently with others of all ages.

*By using a tape recorder to help him to improve his own diction, pronunciation and listening skills.

MATHEMATICS OBJECTIVES

* To help .... to understand and apply the basic concepts of number, quantity, space, logic, quantitative relationships and patterns.

* To encourage him to be able to apply knowledge of the above in everyday life.

STRATEGIES

This will be achieved as follows:

* By use of everyday measuring tools of all kinds, i.e., kitchen and bathroom scales amd implements, rain gauge, thermometer,

rulers, speedometers, number charts, watches and clocks, calendars etc. and to put this type of knowledge into a suitable context.

- By encouraging him to build various structures, implements etc.,with meccano and lego.
- By teaching him how to count and to use a calculator.
- Through the use of appropriate workbooks (including Kookaburra Maths Book)

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY OBJECTIVES

- To encourage in .... an abiding love and understanding of the environment in which he lives and of which he is a part.
- To encourage his inquisitiveness regarding how things are made, where they come from and "why is it so?

STRATEGIES

We will achieve this in the following ways:

- By continuing to read books relating to the animal world, the natural environment and scientific and technological achievements.
- By encouraging ...... to observe closely the natural environment and/or resources in our own neighborhood and in our city andothers we may visit.
- By becoming familiar with museums as a means of increasing knowledge and understanding of those areas.
- By use of simple experiments commensurate with.......... participative abilities to demonstrate simple scientific facts and theories.

HUMAN SOCIETY & ITS ENVIRONMENT OBJECTIVES

- To help ...... to know, love and understand his country, fellow countrymen and heritage.
- To help .... to an understanding of Australia's place in the world.

STRATEGIES

We will achieve these objectives in the following ways:

- By encouraging ..... to compare how various people live within our own family circle as compared with other family groups and then other different groups within the wider society.
- By encouraging his use of an atlas and the writing of short stories related to his "discoveries".
- By continuing to visit the library to search for books related to history, geography and various cultures. This will involve him in computer searches for the appropriate material.
- By having .... learn to speak German.

CREATIVE & PRACTICAL ARTS

- To develop in ..... a love of music and the arts.
- To help him to express himself artistically to his satisfaction in whatever ways he chooses.

STRATEGIES

We will endeavour to achieve these objectives as follows:

- By continuing to expose .... to music (primarily but not exclusively classical music).
- By his continued weekly attendance at music lessons (piano).
- By listening to and watching concerts, ballets etc on radio and television.
- By reading children's classics to/with .... and discussing the characters and authors. This will include searches on the library computer for the extent of an authors work.
- By encouraging .... participation and interest in drawing,painting, modelling, building (lego, meccano, hammer and nails), making papier mache models and greeting cards.By taking him to appropriate stage productions where practicable.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT, HEALTH & PHYSICAL EDUCATION OBJECTIVES

- To instil in .... the value systems required firstly within ourfamily group and then within society.
- To encourage .... to develop healthy living skills, enabling him to utilise his mind and body to their maximum, for his own benefit and that of society.
- To ensure that ..... is always aware of his own worth and to help him to develop as a self confident and self disciplined individual.

STRATEGIES

We hope to achieve these objectives in the following ways:

- By continuing to provide opportunities for .... to mix with relatives, friends and acquaintances.
- By providing him with the family support and discipline necessary for a young child.
- By continuing to encourage .... in healthy eating and living habits by discussion, explanation and example.
- By providing him with information and guidance as appropriate to his age and experience regarding health care, drug abuse, procreation, cleanliness and maintaining personal safety.
- By encouraging his skills and interest in playing tennis, golf and cricket as commensurate with his age and abilities.
- By encouraging his interest in bushwalking and bicycling.

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Writing Because We Love To: Homeschoolers at Work

by Susannah Sheffer

Reviewed by Katharine Houk

As a parent of homeschooled children who have not been given writing "lessons" or "assignments," I approached Susannah Sheffer's book ***Writing Because We Love To: Homeschoolers at Work*** with the anticipation of someone who has also been learning from children, while at the same time "unlearning" many of the things I had been taught in my own school experiences about writing. It was enormously refreshing to read a book that speaks of helping children with writing in terms of a teacher's "relationship" to those children, rather than in terms of rules, devices, motivations, and the "do's and don'ts" that one finds in many books on teaching writing.

Over the past few years Susannah, editor of *Growing Without Schooling* magazine, has worked by mail and over the phone with homeschooled writers, and this book explores the growth that has taken place - both on the part of the young people and for Susannah herself - as a result of those relationships. While discussing the choosing and using of teachers, the reasons children have for writing, how young writers relate to the larger community of writers, revising work, writing to clarify thoughts, inspiration and experimentation, writing via dictation, Susannah offers examples from the work of young writers and illustrates how she responds to them.

As I read the book, every once in a while I thought how unbelievable such freedom and commitment on the part of students might sound to people used to teaching children to write based on a reward and punishment model (assignments, grading, set expectations, keeping up to grade level, etc.). I do hope that many teachers in schools, as well as parents teaching at home, read this inspiring and useful book. As Glenda Bissex says in the book's foreword, "Imagine the energy of students released to choose their own teachers! Imagine the joy of teachers surrounded by students who have chosen to learn from them! Such a revolution in schools where so much is compulsory - from the students' presence at a particular place to how they use their time and with whom - boggles the mind. But Sheffer's sharing of her microcosmic revolution enables us to see in specific detail what this might mean for individual teachers and students and to contemplate its implications on a larger scale."

This book led me to consider the unique ways in which my children approach writing, for their own purposes and to fulfill needs they have in their own lives, and how I could be more helpful to them. Yet one important and unexpected gift I received from reading ***Writing Because We Love To*** was an opportunity to consider my own writing life, to examine anew my assumptions about the writing that I do myself, which sometimes get lost in the busy-ness of my life and my focus on my children. Susannah reaches back into her past experiences with teachers and readers of her writing, exploring their appropriate and meaningful offerings as well as the ways in which they were not helpful. Reading Susannah's book was like having a sensitive and respectful friend give me suggestions for my own writing work, not only with the examples she gave of how she responded to children, but by inspiring me to consider more deeply my own writing past and the meaningful memories with respect to writing which are embedded there. Susannah reminded me that "everything is writable," and I am grateful, for my children's sake as well as my own, to be reminded of that.

Writing Because We Love To is really about understanding ourselves, what we love to do, and the commitment to our work that grows from that love, whatever the work may be. When the winter doldrums set in, curl up with this book, consider your own work as well as that of your children, and enjoy the rare respect for children that shines through the pages of ***Writing Because We Love To***.

The books mentioned in the Book Review Section were reviewed by Katharine Houk or Seth Rockmuller from ALLPIE - Options in Learning newsletter P.O. Box 59 East Chatham N.Y. 12060.

All the books are available in through

The John Holt Book and Music Store
P.O. BOX 420
Kellyville 2153

*Writing Because we love to. (Sheffer)$28 + $1.80 postage

*Family Matters (Guterson) $46 + $4.30 postage

*The Exhausted School (Gatto) $23 + $ 1.80 postage

The Exhausted School: The First National Grassroots Speakout On The Right To School Choice

ed. by John Taylor Gatto

Reviewed by Seth Rockmuller

On the evening of November 13, 1991 John Taylor Gatto and Roland Legiardi-Laura rented Carnegie Hall in New York City to kick-off a grassroots debate about the problems with education in this country and to introduce people to alternative approaches to education. Gatto opened and closed the evening with a scathing indictment of government-controlled schooling. Between his two presentations, five practitioners of existing educational alternatives and two of John Gatto's former students described their approaches to education and the successes that have resulted. Pat Farenga of Holt Associates spoke about home education; Dan Greenberg of the Sudbury Valley School in Framingham, MA spoke about the student-initiated democratic approach to education followed at that school; Kathleen Young spoke about the Waldorf approach to education employed at the Hawthorne Valley School in Harlemville, NY; Dave Lehman, principal of the Ithaca (NY) Alternative Community School, spoke about the availability of alternative educational approaches in public schools; and Mary Leue, founder of The Free School in Albany, NY discussed the importance of community in educating children. Gatto's former students Roland Legiardi-Laura and Barbara Jill Cummings discussed their school experiences and how they received the most valuable parts of their education outside of school.

All of the above presentations are included in *The Exhausted School*. In addition, the book contains an introduction, which includes the preliminary memo sent by Mr. Gatto to the speakers and a discussion of the resistance encountered in trying to publicize the event through the media and through teacher education institutions. An afterword by Gatto on *The Curriculum of Reform* is a provocative essay on the regimentation of our society, the historical efforts to break apart families in order to achieve that regimentation, and the role played by educational institutions in that process.

The issues raised in *The Exhausted School* are of critical importance to families concerned with the education of their children. The purpose of the Carnegie Hall event was to stimulate discussion of those issues. It is certainly peculiar that this event, sponsored by the New York State Teacher of the Year in Carnegie Hall, was virtually ignored by the popular media and by the individuals and institutions active in educational reform. This book provides another opportunity for the Carnegie Hall event to stimulate thought and discussion. Combining a critical appraisal of government schools with positive discussions of at least a smattering of the myriad different approaches to education which are possible, *The Exhausted School* argues forcefully for rebuilding the role of families in the education of their children.

HOMESCHOOL SIBLINGS

It is late morning. Ben has done the breakfast dishes (Emily is on lunch dishes this week) and after doing some writing (a letter to a pen-pal and some word puzzles), some math (the kids have been trying to beat their own best times using "Math Wrap-Ups"), and some research (Ben's love affair with reference books is stronger than ever), the two of them have retreated to the back room together. I hear the murmur of voices as whatever imaginary world they are spinning begins to take form.

As Ben and Emily get older, their lives outside home are becoming more involved. Emily works as a mother's helper, Ben goes for a week at a time to a camp for homeschoolers, they sometimes attend our local Alternative Learning Center on different days from one another, or go off to friends' houses without one another. These separations make their time together more precious to them, and generally speaking, they make good use of it. Ben and Emily are best friends.

I am attempting to get some work done with the computer, writing articles, answering letters. I slowly become aware that the voices from the back of the house are getting louder, more strident. Suddenly Emily bursts into the office, yelling, "I'll never play with him again! He's not being fair!" I hear Ben from the back calling, "It's not my fault! That's the way this game goes!" Before I have a chance to say anything, Emily has turned and stomped back to their game, and after a few minutes of loud negotiations, all is quiet again.

I tend to stay out of their tiffs as much as I can, to be the person who listens and empathizes, but who turns them back to each other to work things out. I am not judge and/or jury in these matters. Based on many years of intense work and play together, Ben and Emily manage to work out their differences without coming to blows or being deliberately nasty (I feel a twinge of remorse as I remember how I used to pull my younger sister's hair when we would have an argument).

Lately, Ben has been expressing his affection for his sister verbally, as well as with spontaneous hugs. I watch their highs and lows with each other with wonder, seeing how intimacy between people unfolds when it is not warped out of shape by peer dependency, competition, lack of free time, distractions like television, and outside arbitrators. Homeschooling has made it necessary for them to find ways to work things out with each other - it's either that, or lose your playmate for the rest of the day!

Last night, while reading the new book *Family Matters: Why Homeschooling Makes Sense*, in the chapter on socialization I came across David Guterson's words, "Homeschooled siblings must live and learn with one another, and the intensity and meaning of their relationship, its daily depth and fragility, become the standard for future relationships. Without the chaotic background of hundreds of peers that ultimately distorts the social lives of school students, allowing carelessness and cruelty to creep in, homeschoolers are able to nurture the health of a few intimate connections." Considering what the proliferation of self-help books about "finding intimacy" implies about adult relationships these days, firm grounding in such friendship and love in childhood can only help Ben and Emily as they move away from home and each other, toward intimacy with people in their adult lives.

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ThankYou

Home Educating Pre-School Children

Jo-Anne Beirne

There are always different ways of looking at things and one thing you can be sure everyone will disagree about is the education of young children. Some people are strongly in favour of lots of early and rigorous exposure to flash cards and classical music, other people believe that it is very important for pre-school children to have lots of free time to use their own creativity to make their own fun and it is only then that they can reach their full learning potential.

There are a huge range of books to read on these sorts of issues from the material by Glen Doman to The Hurried Child by David Elkind. I don't want to take sides as I have four children and I have swung from one end of the spectrum to the other. I feel it is essential people make up their own minds. However I have put together some ideas for activities that I have used that I feel other parents may find useful.

TIME

Just being with your children and talking and responding to them, giving them your precious time and energy is going to ensure that they develop great self-esteem and confidence in their own abilities no matter what they decide to undertake in the future. This can be personally unstimulating work for some parents e.g. reading the same book or doing the same puzzle 25 times a day but nonetheless it says a lot to your children about learning, persistence, love and patience.

WORK

Small children love to help, they don't want to be waited on hand and foot. From sorting the washing and passing the pegs to setting the table and supermarket shopping, all of these activities can be done with children avid to help. "Aren't I a good help, Mum?" Involving children in real work, teaches them really important skills, makes them feel valuable and needed and enables you to get across any lessons you may think are important from counting (the pegs) to discussions about behaviour (you can't just put that thing in the trolley we have to pay for everything we buy and we can't afford that toy).

PEOPLE

Children like to feel part of a family whether it be the nuclear, extended or community family. They bring much joy for instance to older people and receive much in return. Visiting people with your children or just taking them out and letting them interact in shops or at classes you attend or they attend are important learning experiences. It may be a lot easier to get the kids minded while you do the shopping (and in some cases essential) but it can be a great opportunity and in a very short time they become experienced at being "out" and behave in a way that makes you very proud of them. It has been our experience that expecting kids to behave in restaurants, on planes, in church etc. from a very young age soon makes them alert to what is expected of them and enables you to take them anywhere and this also makes them very popular with other adults who will give them a great deal of time, energy and involve themselves in any questions that a child needs answered.

TELEVISION & VIDEO

I an a selective user of television. I feel that there a great many good quality programs on T.V. even for quite young children that can help them become interested in and learn a great many things. I don't have a problem with Sesame Street (except for their big raps for school and American vowel sounds - though none of my children speak with an American drawl.). I do have a problem with kids being exposed to (indoctrinated by) advertisements. Any good programs on commercial channels we always record and edit out the advertisements. Often it is important to sit and watch the T.V. shows with your children to get the most benefit out of them - i.e. you are there to answer the relevant questions as they arise and sort out any difficulties. I suggest people get a TV program at the beginning of each week and mark down what would be useful to record for that week and develop some sort of library (for personal educational use only). The ABC & SBS feature some very good programs - no advertisements, in foreign languages and of high quality. It is useful to get an ABC program in January and July to see what they will have on for the following six months. We have found in the past that shows advertised for infants and even for primary aged school children are quite understandable and interesting for pre-schoolers. We have a three year old who has really enjoyed the Playschool program about the orchestra .

AUDIO TAPES

It is a lot easier to be selective with audio tapes. I believe they create a good deal of concentration and of course they are usually read by famous actors and actresses who have wonderful diction and a lovely way of putting the story across. Perhaps you can provide a special quiet time when your pre-schooler just sits and listens to e.g. the Alfie Tape (from the great stories by Shirley Hughes) or even their favourite musical tape. We often play and sing with tapes we have in the car as we drive along. I have found that listening to story tapes develops acute listening skills and great memory. We use tapes primarily for enjoyment, rather then "education" but over the years the kids have built up a good size repertoire of music and stories they like to listen to and even our three year old can hum her favourite tunes. Often you can get a simple tape recorder that a pre-schooler can operate themselves.

GIFTS

If you have special resources that you would like to use with your children but cannot afford them remember to seek them out at garage sales and opportunity shops. You may even like to ask your parents and those people that give your children gifts to contribute to a special thing you would like your children to have or event or class you would like them to attend. Homeschooled children tend to have a good deal less demand for "name toys" (Barbies, Ninja Turtles etc.) than other children (probably through less peer group and TV exposure) so it is easier to get them in the habit of asking for and being really glad to receive gifts such as books, paints, tickets to the children's ballet or a puppet show etc.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Without going overboard it is easy to expose your children to a wide range of educational experiences in the community. Nearly all local councils, state government bodies and community based organisations provide a list of events and shows that are about to happen in the neighbourhood and your nearest big town or city. All museums, orchestras and other cultural groups have at least some activities for pre-schoolers that they will enjoy. In Sydney the Benelong Program at the Opera House provides a diverse range of activities. Using your phone book and community newspapers and magazines you should be able to find cheap and interesting things to attend or participate in on a regular basis that will make both you and your homeschoolers happy.

READING

It seems logical to me, though I know others who do not agree, that if you read regularly to your children they will come to love reading and think it is a very important activity. I think it is important to curl up with a good book for adults but even more important to curl up with a good, suitable book with your children as often as possible, hopefully daily. I believe that reading is a wonderful activity that fathers can take responsibility for. As well as getting fathers actively involved in the learning process, they have the time to share something interesting and exciting with their children and to see them develop and mature. Some of the very best memories our children and my husband have of my children's childhoods are "when Dad read to us". If we are tidying the bookshelves, so often a comment will come out "Oh, I love that book Dad read that to us heaps of times". If your children value books it is great preparation for their educational future.

LIBRARY

Your library is your cheapest and most useful community resource. There are often craft days, story time and special events for pre-schoolers. If these things do not happen in your library now you can help to initiate them and this will further help to make your child feel at home in the library. Even monthly visits for a pre-schooler will be forging important pathways for their future.

WRITING & DRAWING

Some children love to write and draw while others are not so crazy about the idea. For all children the resources to write and draw should always be close at hand and not so tidy or well stored as to inhibit creativity. It doesn't hurt to have pens and crayons, paints and textas on a low desk that has a piece of plastic underneath. All scrap paper can be placed in some sort of box or container nearby along with paste, sticky tape, glitter and other child fancies. Time to create freely without parental interference and correction is really important with lots of hugs and congratulations for the results being an essential conclusion to the process.

PUZZLES

There are lots of great wooden puzzles around for children. (Garage sales are great for these). They may like to have help to do them or they may like to do them alone. Of course you can make your own "puzzles" which can encourage your child to think laterally and creatively - what is the shortest way from the dining room to the front gate ? Can you find all the black handled utensils? What would you use to pick up the poached eggs ? How many wheels altogether on these two toys with wheels ? Why does the light do that ?

MUSIC

Music is a simple thing to share with your children. Few houses don't have a tape recorder and every house has a radio. There are a huge range of stations providing really good quality music programs (and information, current affairs and science programs for the parents) that you can share simply and cheaply with your children. There are the activities provided listed in special events above and the resources provided by TV. You can sing, hum, dance or play percussion with your child or facilitate them doing it themselves.

CLASSES & OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES

There are lots of classes and outside activities to attend with pre-schoolers from Kindy Gym, Little Athletics and Swimming Classes to Yamaha Music, dancing and homeschooling support group meetings. All activities can be stimulating and positive experiences but need to be monitored. It is my personal experience that teachers and some parents can take these activities very seriously as they attempt to train up their little darling and/or genius. There is a strong possibility of burn-out (yours and/or your childs) so never pay ahead for lessons for longer than a term. It is also rarely advisable to have pre-schoolers in classes where parents are not warmly welcomed. Please remember that there are children who may not even want to participate in group classes even if their siblings happily did so, this is no big deal and they will be happy to when they are older.

CREATIVE FREE TIME - DEVELOPING IMAGINATION

We all have lots of things we like to do by ourselves. Many people may regard our "creative time" as wasteful and useless but for us it is important. Children are the same, some of them need lots of time to be imaginative, to try out their dreams and inventions, to drive cars up and down a single dirt road in the garden or to build a dam or be a mother to their dolls. They may need to just sit and sing or make endless cups of tea for the teddies or ride rockets to the moon. Much has been written about this process and its importance to later learning. It has been my personal observation that free time while important for sanity and creativity also tends to promote self-motivated, original learning that does not tie one down to the worn channels of tradition but inspires one to achieve far past those grades and levels that are pre-determined as the "achievement level" for ones age and ability.

STRUCTURE OR SERENDIPITY: A RETROSPECTIVE

Dr John Vaughan

HOW DOES LEARNING HAPPEN?

Those of you who know me best are aware that I have spent a large part of my professional life looking at "conventional wisdom" with some skepticism. If you are expecting that tonight, you'll probably not be disappointed. However, let me say at once to my potential critics that I freely concede retrospective consideration is selective, impressionistic, uncontrolled, unscientific, and lacking in research design. Indeed it's rather like normal living. In my traverse of the years, to the extent that I was conscious of learning, my concentration was on "what" I was learning. In retrospect, however it is the "how" of learning which comes to assume major significance.

PROCESS AND CONTENT

I have a profound attachment to Bernard Shaw's aphorism: *"Education is what you have left when you have forgotten everything you learned at school."* Shaw could distinguish between content and process.Content is the stuff we work on. It is not to be ignored. Because, in today's world, there is so much of it, careful selection is of critical importance. But no matter how careful the selection, with the passage of time much content will prove to be irrelevant to emerging needs, much will be revealed as fallacious, much will be forgotten.On the other hand, the processes which we develop and use on our neverending educational journey remain with us. We add to them, we amend and refine them and we go on using them, day by day. ....

As I reflect, my mind does not focus naturally on acquired information (important though that might have been to my teachers), but rather on incidents, occurrences, experiences and, above all else, on people. People made the impact. All through my primary and secondary schooling, I thought my task was to hold in my head the information which teachers placed there and spill it out at test or examination time in the form of 'right answers'. (I might add that there are too many people today who continue to see this as the task).

A reasonable measure of success in this mind-stocking/stock-taking educational procedure enabled me to experience some sense of achievement, to please my teachers and to give some satisfaction to my parents. And though I did not realise it at the time, I was in fact learning a great deal about attitudes and approaches, about techniques and procedures, about human interaction - about "processes".

THE TEACHER (PARENT) IS "CRITICAL".

When I struggle to recall specific lessons or even, more generally, courses, I find the memories long gone, but, as I've indicated, the people remain. Most of what I learned and retained was related to people. This is why, in the educational enterprise, I see the teacher (who, incidentally, may be parent, relative, friend, peer or seer) as "critical". The person who gives the lesson is infinitely more significant than the lesson itself. The human relationship between teacher and learner far outweighs the importance of formal status, of knowledge of theories and procedures, of administrative structures.

I tremble to think of a child of the future closeted alone with a computer screen, 'being educated' .As, over the years, I have sat (figuratively and literally) at the feet of the theorists, researchers and philosophers, as I have grappled with the ideas which have come and gone, I have discerned that the fundamentals of teaching/learning haven't changed much over time.

An edited version of a talk by retiring Educational Consultant, Dr John Vaughan. Reprinted from the documents of The Primary English Teachers Association. If anyone would like a full copy they should contact PETA Laura St. Newtown NSW 2042 PH. 02 565 1277 Fax 02 565 1070

THE MAGIC MOMENT

The semantics change, the phraseology changes, the explanations frequently become increasingly convoluted and 'scientific', but the successful teacher of today, when it's all boiled down, will be using the techniques of Christ, of Socrates, of Rousseau, of Dewey. And that teacher needs to be ever sensitive to the existence of the "magic moment" when the child is ready to learn. The moment may be ephemeral, but it is fundamental to learning. It is impossible to forecast and difficult to recognise, but the effective teacher will grasp it.The child who wants to learn will learn. There is no such thing as education by fiat. That's why compulsory studies show little profit and usually lead to rejection of the course. As Brendan Behan said, "The Gaelic was spoken in Ireland until the Government made it compulsory."

Teachers are blessed when they develop a facility for recognising or, perchance, creating magic moments and using them to enable the child to understand. Dymphna Cusack was aware of this when she wrote of opening 'a window in the dark' (the title of her book) "a window through which the child could see the world". She provided two delightful illustrations: the lad from the slow-learners class who, when given a membership ticket to the council library, became a voracious reader her abandonment of the prescribed poetry syllabus and the development in her pupils of a love of poetry by reading to them poetry which "she loved".You will be opening windows in the dark when you challenge children to challenge you and to question the conventional wisdom, as did Gallileo, Newton and Einstein. Or when, instead of inflicting your meaning of the

system's meaning on the child, you accept and show that you value the child's meaning.

NOT DIRECTOR BUT GUIDE

It is what you will be doing when you provide the climate and the gentle guidance and let the child do the developing, when you abandon the structuring of espaliers and let the trees fulfil their own potential, when you play the role not of director but of "guide".In our time we have all used magic moments. Frequently we haven't recognised the fact. Indeed, our objectives often differed from the consequences. But when teacher action and the child's magic moment were synchronised, massive learning occurred.This is the marvelous process of serendipity, the faculty of achieving most remarkable results without careful planning and without knowing precisely what's happening.

A TEACHER CAN ACCEPT CRITICISM

I recall a personal involvement with it when, at teachers college, I had the great good fortune to learn from Chris McRae. He taught a carefully structured course in psychology, based on a set text. I don't recall much about it.What I learned from McRae was that a teacher could accept criticism, disagreement and argument; that the status quo was not immutable and therefore beyond inquiry; that knowledge andculture did not exist in state of perfection, awaiting transmission. These understandings were not McRae's lesson topics. He taught them serendipitously. The moments were mine and he was the teacher. I also learned from him that my other lecturers were pursuing a chimera when they taught the principles of lesson structure: carefully * assemble and * present material work to a climax, always have a precise denouement, with all loose ends ties up at the end. From McRae I learned that the good lesson is open-ended, from the beginning of further inquiry.

I like the story of David Shepherd, the wildlife conservationist, was asked to explain how he had learned to be prepared for the task. He replied that, while travelling in Africa, he came across a herd of zebra lying dead beside a poisoned waterhole. "At that moment," he said, "I knew I was a conservationist." There was no preparation, no structured course just serendipity. Then there was the paleontologist who was asked when he had decided to pursue that profession. He said, "At age nine I picked up a fossil and knew that I had found my life's work".

"Though it did not occur until I was in my teens, by far the most significant learning experience to influence my life was what, at the time, was considered by the participants to be no more thana casual comment.One day, as part of a general free-wheeling conversation, my Dad asked, "What are you thinking of doing when you leave school?"I replied, "I'm going to work with you on the farm."His response was, "First, get yourself an education. Then, if you want to come back to the farm, you'll be welcome."I don't believe it was a planned lesson. I don't believe he knew what he had done. Serendipity, indeed. From that day on, I have been getting myself an education.

LEARNING TO READ

.................I go back now to an earlier time. I recall, at age 4 or 5, sitting with my Dad at the kitchen table as, by the light of akerosene lamp, as he read aloud from the Sydney Morning Herald, two days old. Gradually, with his guidance, I came to understand the significance of the black marks on the page and to derive meaning from them. Thus, in the complete absence of theory, I learned to read.

Later I attended school and experienced the thrill of 'the fat cat that sat on the mat'. It was years before it dawned on me that my Dad with the Sydney Morning Herald and the teacher with the 'fat cat' were engaged in the same activity. During the years between 11 and 15 I read anything I could lay my hands on, abetted by a youthful uncle who was a member of a lending library. He knew not what he did. I like to agree with James Michener: *"You should read all the books you can before you're twenty. A man (or woman) can travel all over the world and come back the same kind of fool he was when he started. You can't do that with books."* ....

SERENDIPITY

As a boy I used to sit, seen but not heard (as were the requirements of the time), while my Dad and a neighbor discussed the problems of the nation and the world, and propounded and criticised their own solutions.Thus, with no structures, no formal lessons, but, indeed, quite serendipitously, I learned about governments and their functions, about politics and politicians. I also learned that there was a place for individual thinking about such matters and that they could be discussed incisively and without rancour. Further, I learned a great deal about language and its uses from two men of limited formal education but formidable self development.

Some years ago I knew a student who was having difficulty with leaving certificate mathematics. I suggested that she consult with her teacher and seek guidance. This she did. He was not very helpful but did give her a booklet of previous leaving certificate papers, suggesting that she work through them at home and submit her output for checking. She spent a week-end on the job and, filled with enthusiasm, set out for school onMonday morning. Confidently, she waylaid the teacher in the playground to show him what she had done. His response was, "I'm too busy to be bothered with that now. Go away and see me some other time." I'm sure his intention was not malicious: he knew not what he did. But a perverse form of serendipity was at work. That student never again 'bothered' the teacher. She didn't bothermaths much either!

YOU CAN DO IT !!

Last year I visited a primary school on the occasion of its 75th anniversary. I had taught there in the late '40s.There came up to me a man who said, "You probably don't remember me," (I didn't) "but you taught me in sixth class." When he gave me the name, my recollection worked: he had changed somewhat in forty odd years."One day," he said, "you set us some very difficult maths, when I got it all right, you said, "A boy who really understands the"principles of mathematics". You convinced me. I went on & became a mathematician & an engineer. I just want to say thanks."

THE MESSAGE OF PRIME EDUCATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

The single comment had been more significant than all the carefully planned lessons, the gradual accumulation of mathematical concepts. Serendipitously he had got the message: "I can do it".That's a message of prime educational significance. Undoubtedly, implementation of then current theories over time has helped pupils to learn it. But I know of no theory which clearly states:"The aim of this structure is to establish in the learner's mind the unshakable belief:I CAN DO IT !!!!

ALL CHILDREN CAN LEARN

In the early '50s I taught in a school which catered for court-committed delinquent boys. By and large, they were social misfits and educational failures. Some wore the mantle of failure with pride (they had little else to be proud of), some with despair. Those boys, though they didn't plan it, taught me something of enormous importance. They taught me that all pupils, referred to variously in the jargon as disadvantaged, neglected, dull, bright, talented, gifted, problem-cases, failed pupils, if appealed to in the appropriate manner, if given security, if encouraged as individuals, can learn.Is that the basis of a theory of a structure? Perhaps it is.

Perhaps the very notion of serendipity is a theory. Perhaps recognition of its significance is another step along the road which leads towards, but never reaches, "wisdom". My essential message is that the process of teaching/learning is even harder than you think. There is no 'easy fix', no universally applicable theory. Each child is different: what works with one fails with another. But difficult though the task, search for the magic moments when the child is ready to learn, and assist in the process.

Remember always that education is not about implementation of a currently favoured theory, not about mind-stocking, followed by stock-taking. What is fundamentally important to the child is the development of thinking skills: observing, inquiring, data gathering, hypothesising, testing hypotheses, problem solving, analysing, generalising, applying facts, principles and theories to new situations. What counts is not what the child knows today, but what he or she can do with it tomorrow.

Keep in mind the advice of the experienced teacher to the neonate:"In nearly every class there is a youngster eager to argue. Your first impulse will be to silence him or her. I advise you to think carefully before you do. That is probably the only child really listening." Whatever the presently popular structure, remember always thatthe essential educational factor is the relationship between you and the individual child. Learn to recognise and use the magic moments. The effective teacher is ever sensitive to psychological climate, to child response, to the impact of word and action, to the possibilities of gloriously elusive serendipity !

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* * *

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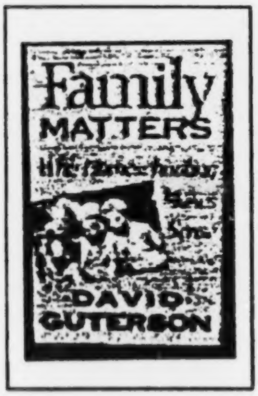
HARD TIMES IN PARADISE
DAVID and MICKI COLFAX

HARD TIMES IN PARADISE, by David and Micki Colfax. The authors of *Homeschooling For Excellence* describe how homeschooling, homesteading, and hard work shaped the Colfax family and prepared their children for the real world and places like Harvard University. Funny, insightful, and inspiring. See page 4.



FAMILY MATTERS: Why homeschooling makes sense, by David Guterson. A high school teacher, whose three boys are homeschooled, compares and contrasts the two worlds of education that he straddles. A penetrating, highly readable book that is especially useful for homeschoolers facing opposition. See page 3.

GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING

In 1977 author and teacher John Holt founded *Growing Without Schooling*, the first magazine devoted to exploring and publicizing issues about raising children and helping them learn without attending schools. Since then we have published stories, news, and information about learning outside of school from all over the globe. Each bi-monthly issue contains news about the homeschooling movement in the U.S. and around the world; pen-pal listings; a directory of homeschooling families; reviews of useful materials; a feature on a specific topic or question; in-depth exchanges among our readers about such issues as making a living while teaching your own children, TV and homeschooling, and more. A reader writes: "GWS is the written form of an information network like mothers have had for ears. Perhaps this is a new literary form" Join us today!

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Joanna Hoyt (ME) is interviewed in GWS #83's Focus on *Young Lobbyists: Homeschooling Kids in the Legislative Process.*

Christian McKee (WI) wrote for our Focus on *Working Toward a Goal*, GWS #84.

> "For over ten years the leading homeschooling publication."— David and Micki Colfax in *Homeschooling for Excellence*

Growing Without Schooling subscriptions and back issues are not kept in stock in Australia. They need to be ordered from the U.S. The costs may change a little as they depend on currency fluctuations. There are two ways to facilitate payment for GWS:

1) Ring John Holt's Book and Music Store in Massachusetts on 0015 1 617 864 3100 (or fax on 0015 1 617 864 9235) and leave your order, name, Visa or MasterCard number, and expiry date and we will process your order and send it to you.

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2) Ring John Holt's Book and Music Store in Sydney on 02 629 3727 (or fax on 02 629 3278) and place your order with them. Our Sydney branch will inform you of the cost and will order from Holt in the U.S. within 24 hours using their Visa facility. You must post your cheque or money order to Homeschoolers Australia immediately.

G.W.S

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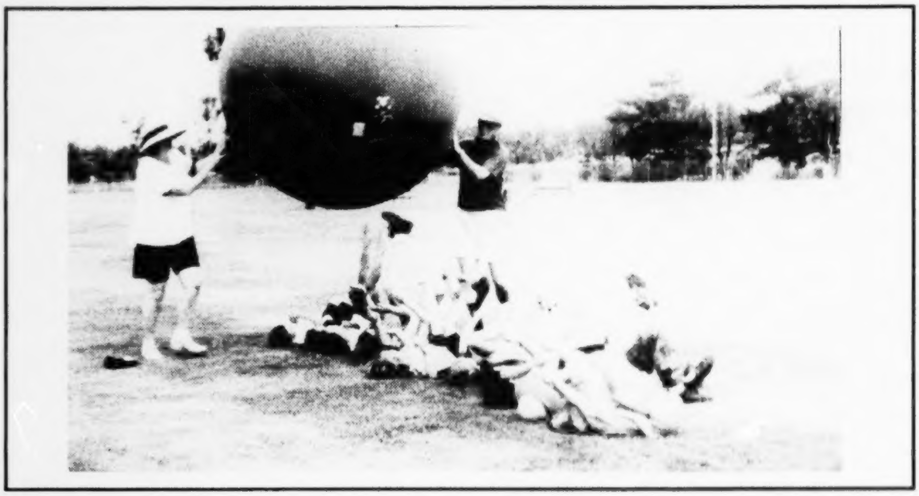
Custody Issues and Homeschooling

Anna Adams and Jo-Anne Beirne



It is distressing when parents, motivated by concern for their children, choose to homeschool, only to find their families vehemently opposed to this educational option and not at all inhibited about expressing this opposition. This is not uncommon, but during those challenging early days, the couple know that as the child's parents, they still have the responsibility for the final decision. They are still as a unit, in control of their familial destiny.

What has become increasingly common is the number of single parents wanting to homeschool and in this group, often bitter and highly emotional contests are fought between the separated parents on how the children should be educated. This opposition is much more difficult to experience as more people are involved with the decision-making and both custodial and non-custodial parents can feel their parental roles and rights being undermined and made insignifigant.

Jane nervously twisted a tissue, her red eyes conveying the trauma of the last few nights. Brian had just left, banging the door emphatically and we were both shocked. He was so angry, full of accusations that Jane was turning the children against him, that he had rights concerning his children education, that Jane was both too ignorant and too disorganised to educate the children herself and that the last thing he was going to do was allow Jane to jeopardise the children's future. All the time he was delivering this speech, he paced the kitchen, not looking at either of us. His parting remark was that he was going to appeal the custody decision because Jane was proving herself to be an unfit mother.

"I am so sick of this, sometimes it seems as if it will never end. It has been two years since we first separated and still these fights continue. It doesn't seem to matter what I do, we end up with these outrageous scenes. What am I going to do now? Do you think he will really appeal the custody ruling? Just as I thought life was going to get better......"

We talked a bit about Brian, the events of the last few weeks and what had been happening with the children. After the initial difficult adjustment to single life, Jane had noticed her children were losing their "joie de vivre". They just didn't have the same enthusiasm for activities. Jane had not taken the decision to homeschool lightly for a combination of academic social and personal reasons and after talking with their teachers and a counsellor, Jane felt that the children needed to be homeschooled.

In fact this is not an unusual scenario and as homeschooling grows "the bitter divorce" is happening more and more often. In time, many support groups will be faced with single parents who have the added complication of an ex-spouse who objects to homeschooling and does not hesitate to make their feelings known.

Recently a non-custodial parent has vented their spleen against the custodial parent, through the media, politicians and other administrators. There are many issues involved and there is the concern that these emotional dramas will damage homeschooling.

Of course there are many different people involved all of whom have differing needs and priorities the children, the custodial parent, the non-custodial parent, the administrators of homeschooling, members of support groups. There are no easy answers but these are the most common issues and responses.

Sometimes, the choice to homeschool for a custodial parent is made initially to reduce the degree of stress on the family members at this difficult time and to consolidate new relationship dynamics. Unfortunately, the non-custodial parent is very aware of the fact the family is re-adjusting without them and they can go through a period of feeling a sense of acute loss and anger. This can be easily intensified if the non-custodial parent sees the homeschooling custodial parent as getting "more than half" of the children, turning the children against them and so on. So the emotions then can amplify into jealousy and can slip into revenge if no one helps this person re-gain a sense of control over their emotions.

Given this situation, it is mostly a waste of time to indulge in long philosophical debates because these almost certainly will not end in acceptable resolution without attention to the emotional experience of the family. It is the delivery of what is being said, rather than the content that is the important to listen to at this time.

Given the status of homeschooling under the law - i.e. equivalent to private and state schooling, and its administration, it seems likely that the family Law Court will always allow the custodial parent to homeschool, so fears of the non-custodial parent's threats are usually unnecessary. Often all the non-custodial parent really wants is to be re-assured that they still will have their connection with their children. It is up to the custodial parent to demonstrate that homeschooling will enhance their opportunities to connect with their children, not decrease them.

Some suggestions

Aim for conversation and negotiation. If it is possible, include the non-custodial parent in as much of the preparation work as possible up to and including the inspector's visit.Discussing the children's education gives both parents the chance to demonstrate their maturity and responsibility to the children. It is not the children's fault the marraige failed and maybe the least the parents owe to the children is working on their education together.

If this is not possible, at least send the non-custodial parent copies of the material when it is completed. The non-custodial parent should, if at all possible, be asked to become involved in the process sharing their own skills with their children. Rely on them to do these things and provide feedback - listen to their feedback. Invite them to homeschooling seminars and support group days, suggest that they be responsible for some of the excursions to museums and other interesting events.

Even if there is much initial resisitance to how the homeschooling is going to happen, don't cut off avenues of communication. Get your child to keep a diary of their educational activities for the non-custodial parent or write regularly or send their special drawings or photos of things they are doing as part of their educational program to the non-custodial parent as often as possible. Every so often copy your own diary and give it to the non-custodial parent for them to see what you are achieving.

Explain that they will have more say rather than less in their child's education if they want to become involved. Talk about the advantages of flexible custodial visits and time not based around weekends and school holidays. Talk about the advantages to the child and to the non-custodial parent of homeschooling.

The children often feel that they are the cause of the conflict because they are the subject of the argument. They can feel that if they caused it by wanting to be homeschooled, they can fix it by volunteering to go to school. As this is very rarely the case, even if the child goes to school, it doesn't take long for another issue to arise where the non-custodial parent challenges the custodial parent's decision and the whole process starts again. Custodial parents, who want to break this cycle where homeschooling has become the issue, need to be very clear and firm that this is what is happening. The homeschooling issue itself then becomes non-negotiable and the parents can spendtheir energy on finding workable ways to achieve the best possible educational structure together. This also relieves the children of the responsibility of solving their parents problems for them.

This does not mean ignoring children's wishes when they express the desire to go to school. It means listening to them very carefully, about why they want to go and what they think will change if they are at school. If they say, "Mummy and Daddy will stop fighting", it's a good indication they are making choices for their parents sake, rather than their own.

How support groups can help.

Support groups are just that, support groups. The role of the members can be to listen and help clarify issues. This may not seem like much, but it is of great importance that people in crisis have someone who just listens.

Legal Update

QUEENSLAND
WEST AUSTRALIA
SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Queensland

Queensland homeschooling groups are about to make a move on changing their law so that it is at least more in step with the laws governing homeschooling in other States and hopefully superior to all other laws. This "coming together" was precipitated in part by John Peacock's lengthy visit to Queensland in 1992. The result is that at the end of March 1993 many Queensland and other interested homeschoolers will gather together to form some groups who will set up an agenda for action. If you would like to know more about the Queensland get together which will be in Brisbane, the co-ordinator at present is Rachel Hearn 075 436 451.

West Australia

The new regulations, that have been discussed for some years, will, we are told, come into being in February 1993 in West Australia. The new Chief Executive Officer, Greg Black has made it clear however, that the continuing concerns of W.A. homeschoolers will most certainly be listened to, unlike what has been happening in the past. In a meeting held between homeschoolers and Greg Black he made it clear that these new regulations would not be "frozen in stone" but would be open to negotiation and feedback for at least the next two years. He also promised to review them so that they were reflective of homeschoolers' concerns. Mr Greg Black should stay in office even if there is a change of government in West Australia - the election is imminent. Difficulties for the future come in two forms (1) a case that will possibly be go to the Supreme Court concerning homeschooling and (2) the prediction that Fred Tubby, shadow Minister for Education in W.A., if elected will rewrite the Education Act, and this will effect homeschooling.

South Australia

Susan Seeley wrote this report in the magazine Home Based Learning, South Australia. This is a report on Eve Leuick's and my meeting with Marelle Harisun 2nd of October 1992. Marelle is the current co-ordinator for Homeschooling in South Australia, and as such, has been working on the changes needing to occur to the current Education Act to incorporate the option of homeschooling more directly and more openly. She is also the Director for the Western Area, based in Whyalla.

We were very excited and impressed with her natural commitment to creating a legislative vehicle for home-based learning to take off in full glory! This lady, as Eve so observantly pointed out, has no emotional hang-ups with regard to homeschooling! We noted that she obviously raised her three adult sons as individuals more than as her children, and it is this fact that allows her to see what homeschooling can offer relative to institutional schooling. She sees that home-schooling can be a forward leap in the field of education, as opposed to the general assumption in the education department, at present, that it is a backward step into the educational dark ages!!!

Naturally, she will be confronting flak from some of her colleagues and superiors in this process. It was observed that this would arise out of fear and lack of familiarity with real cases of healthy homeschooling experiences, as well as the fact that at some level the self-pride these officials have in their understanding of education, is confronted by folk who are not officially in the professional field. (Also having to weave her way through the political climate.)

As with other countries and states who have gone through (and are still going through) the administrative growing pains of adequately and appropriately addressing, managing and supporting home-based learning, the main social issues seem to be relative to:

(a) how to co-operatively work with the Fundamentalist Christian and like families, working with the A.C.E. program (which is a less than adequate curriculum from their standards), and who choose to bypass the current legal requirements for homeschooling; and,

(b) how to monitor the potential child abuse that could occur, through offering the public the outright freedom to not send their children to school.

Another topic in our convivial discussion covered the more radical unstructured approaches to home-based learning and her outright support of such emergent learning. It was interesting to note her lack of bias to either more structured or unstructured approaches, and that the bottom line for her was working in harmony with the natures of the given adults, as well as children. As was applicable to both Eve and I, discussion of end of year reporting in those emergent style learning approaches and their what can be 'lack of' work to show for a year's learning explorations, was again received with a wise mother's calm. "That's fine!" was her response. It was obvious that her understanding of evaluation does not necessarily have to be from a more natural life-process orientation. As you could imagine, this was music to Eve's and my ears to have such a senior and respected education department official able to be unruffled by such socially 'risky' approaches.

As we proceeded, she revealed the secondary and tertiary institutions are in the throws of opening up their doors to a more 'offering what the students request' than making the students have to choose within the constraints of what they offer! She stated that after this is established it should not be long before such an approach touches the primary school sector. This is unlikely to have any effect in the next 5 years, but Marelle pointed out, just the fact that the education community is moving in this direction opens up many possibilities for the future resource needs of home schooled children during school hours. (She spoke of a "voucher" system.)

I spoke of my own situation with my 9 year old daughter, Sky, choosing to attend our local state school and that we will be requesting continued exemption on the basis of protecting her human rights for freedom of choice during her "compulsory" school age years, even while she is attending and participating in a state school's teaching program. Again, Marelle offered her outright support in these actions.

Marelle also spoke of how her current proposals include having our local schools open their doors to homeschooling families in the same way as they have to long distance educating families. That is, they become available for accessing resources for social instructions to welcome the resource needs of homeschooling families and invite children to participate in special activities like camps, sports days, swimming programmes, excursions and music classes with their peers; even to go for the occasional or regular lunch hour to hang out with special friends. Two of Marelle's next steps are as follows:

(a) to publish a brochure detailing procedures of parents wishing to register and apply exemption to home-educate (a "welcoming" brochure!)

(b) to establish a task force with parents (and interested children will be my suggestion) to really get the ball rolling! For this to occur, she will be inviting Glen Edwards, Associate Director General - Schooling, and her superior, to put his blessings on this process, in the next couple of weeks. (If you are interested in being part of this, I suggest that you make yourself known to Marelle. Her telephone number is (086) 45-6500.)

One last thing is that I suggested, in the near future, that a day's seminar is established that brings together all who are participating in the process that is involved in legally offering our children the educational option of home-based learning. That is, officials (senior administration, as well as district superintendents/attendance officers) and parents, as well as interested children to get together in the name of working together as a co-operative team/whole. I suggested that a couple of speakers from each category give a short talk on their experiences, what they would like the others to understand about their positions, hopes for the future and being available for questions and answers. I also felt that watching the newly available video called HOME GROWN KIDS together, would be great. Marelle welcomed this idea and strongly recommended that Glen Edwards be invited to participate. I am willing to initiate this and I intend to request secretarial support and administration costs be tended to through the department. I will also be requesting that a conference space is offered for use, maybe at The Orphanage Teachers Centre in Goodwood. Any wishes to present a talk please contact me on (08) 398-2005 (Children &/or adults.)

On that note, I just remembered that Marelle has agreed to request that The Orphanage Library start a specialist section on homeschooling with regard to books, videos and journals. If homeschooling takes off in S.A. like it is doing in other states (NSW had 700 new registrations in just this last year!), then this can start branching out into our local TASS Centres. So send any recommendation to be published in our newsletter and I will take responsibility for passing these on to the library manager concerned.

I also requested a recommendation of an education journal that interested folks could write about homeschooling in, to gain professional understanding and recognition. She suggested an Australian journal called Curriculum Perspectives and she knows the editor personally. She suggested that he would probably be interested in including a Point and Counterpoint section on homeschooling.

So in summary, due to Marelle's position coming up for grabs in December, she has committed herself to getting this show rolling with solid momentum prior to this time. I am grateful for her breadth and depth of understanding, as well as competence in actualising her visions. I will be sending a copy of this report to Marelle.

MUSIC

REPERTOIRE | OBJECTIVES | ACTIVITIES

The Children:

KNOWN SONGS

Revise and sing songs lea:
previous phases.

NEW SONGS
(See syllabus p 86)
- .*Hey Mr Echo (MBF
- .*Down Came a Lady (CAS
- .*Love Somebody (SS)
- .*How Many Raindrops (SS,
- . Trot Old Joe (SS)
- . Click Clack (CSB,
- .*Go Home/Come Home (CSB
- . Little Mouse (CAS
- . March March Soldiers (CAS

(* Solo singing)

- . Songs for themes and sp occasions (syllabus p 4 own choice)
- . Songs for expressive si (See SS, MBF, or own ch

RHYMES
Own selection
(See MM, MFML for ideas)

RECORDED MUSIC
From: (AIM Grade 1 Vol. 2
. Morris Dance

HOW CAN I FIND OUT WHAT THEY EXPECT SCHOOL CHILDREN TO KNOW ??

When constructing a program or evaluating one's child some people feel it is important to know what school children are supposed to know at each grade level. One of the easier ways to find this out, I found when in Western Australia recently at the **State Government Bookshop Supply House Grnd Fl. 815 Hay St, Perth W.A 6000 Telephone 09 222 8216 Fax 09 321 2192.**

They had quite a few interesting resources (The Ministry Office in Royal St carries some supplementary material, not available in Hay St.) syllabuses, videos & other materials. Some of it is very overpriced & not a great deal of use to homeschoolers but some things I found interesting are copied in small part on pages 43-45.

MATHEMATICS They sell a set of seven A3 sized sheets called Maths Syllabus Overview that state in jargon, but still quite readable terms, what the W.A. Education Department thinks that a child should know in all the main areas of mathematics at each grade level in primary school. It is set out in a very detailed format with columns so you can "mark off" what your child knows. There are TWO full sets in a packet and when I was there they cost JUST $1.45 EACH SET OF TWO !!!

ENGLISH The same exists (seven A3 sized sheets) in a very detailed format (with columns so you can "mark off" what your child knows) called English Syllabus Overview under headings such as Language Concepts, Text understandings and conventions, Spoken Language, Punctuation, Phonology, Forms of Text....... many people tell me that they would like to know if they are "covering" what the schools think is important for a child to know and here is a very cheap and easy way to do this !

MUSIC: There is also a set for music which I believe was around $7 but again it was K-6 and lists repertoire, objectives, activities and evaluation for each grade level, it is called Music Progamming ideas for Primary Schools.

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ove to the beat o
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tep the beat of a

epresent the beat
ead left to right
epresent the beat
hen a child steps
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hildren point to
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I Hear With My Li
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eacher or child c
hyme. Children i

hildren clap or p

xplain and use th
ord accurately.

air songs (see no
hythms. Encourag
ords. You may wis

BEAT AND RHYTHM
1.10 Distinguish between beat and rhythm.

a) Sing a known song -
b) Beat/rhythm circle
c) Use a puppet - sing without singing wh

Learning Mathematics SYLLABUS OVERVIEW : Stage Two

Bold italic print indicates objectiv

SPACE

PART ONE: Movement and Position in the Environment

1. Carry out activities which develop an interest in movement and position: (a) according to directions formulated by teachers and children; (b) move around territories, home area, neutral ground.				
2. Plan and arrange the classroom and other areas for special purposes.				
3. Carry out activities to investigate: (a) regions and boundaries; (b) paths.				
4. Make models and drawings of familiar objects and areas.				

PART TWO: Exploring Three-dimensional Shape

1. Carry out activities to become familiar with the attributes of shapes.				
2. Carry out activities involving the comparison and classification of shapes.				
3. Model and draw a variety of shapes.				
4. Carry out activities in which the uses of shapes in common objects and structures are investigated.				

PART THREE: Exploring Two-dimensional shape

1. Carry out activities to investigate the attributes of shapes.				
2. Carry out activities involving the comparison and classification of shapes.				
3. Make and draw a variety of shapes.				
4. Investigate the use of shapes in common objects and structures.				

PART FOUR: Transforming Shapes

1. Carry out activities to investigate changes in position.				
2. Carry out activities to investigate symmetrical shapes and patterns.				
3. Carry out activities to investigate				

MEASUREMENT

PART ONE: Length

1. Use stimulus material in a variety of free and directed activities such as: classifying, sorting, matching, ordering, arranging, building, constructing.				
2. Compare and seriate linear dimensions: (a) ***of objects;*** (b) ***of persons;*** (c) ***of distances.***				
3. ***Measure lengths and distances using arbitrary units. Estimate before measuring.***				
4. ***Use the 10 cm rod as a measuring unit.***				
5. ***Find own height in centimetres with teacher's assistance.***				
6. ***Relate measurement of length to other measures.***				

PART TWO: Area

1. Use a variety of material in free and directed activities such as: colouring, painting, cutting out, pasting, framing, enclosing, covering, tracing, drawing, pattern making.				
2. Carry out games and activities requiring movement and arrangement of shapes.				
3. Compare and seriate the size of surface and areas by: (a) direct comparison; (b) use of arbitrary units.				
4. ***Relate activities with area to arbitrary measure of other attributes.***				

PART THREE: Volume and Capacity

1. Use a variety of material in free activities such as: pouring, filling and emptying, modelling and shaping, packing, stacking, building, combining and separating, constructing and dismantling, cooking ...				
2. Carry out directed activities involving informal (non-numerical) comparison of the				

PART FOUR: Mass

1. Use recommended mater variety of free and directe activities such as: balanci hefting, lifting, lowering, throwing, rolling, carryin cooking.
2. Compare and seriate obje quantities of material acc mass.
3. ***Play games and carry ou activities using the see-s***
4. Carry out experiments w modelling material using balance.
5. ***Find own mass with tea assistance using scales.***
6. ***Relate activities with m arbitrary measures of ot attributes.***

PART FIVE: Time

1. Take part in incidental d of times, dates and event
2. Take part in activities b sequences of events: (a) days of the week; (b) use of the calendar; (c) names of the season (d) current school event (e) annual events.
3. Take part in activities in (a) response to rhythmi (b) moving at different (c) rotational movemer (d) timing, using arbitra methods.
4. Use timing devices to e appreciation of the dur time intervals such as on three minutes, ten minu
5. Carry out activities inv and clock reading: (a) play games using spi dials; (b) ***tell the time on the*** (c) ***begin learning to te at significant mome the day.***

NU

PART ONE: Addition and Subtraction

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Overview 2–3 Focus Poin

EXT

LANGUAGE CONCEPTS

- develop children's understanding that printed messages are constant and cannot be added to or clarified by the author after they have been printed
- draw children's attention to 'story language' e.g. '... lived happily ever after', 'Once upon a time ...'
- clarify understanding of what a sentence is
- clarify understanding of what a word is
- develop understanding that symbol sound relationships vary according to context and placement

TEXT UNDERSTANDINGS AND CONVENTIONS

2.1 SPOKEN AND WRITTEN

2.1.1 Whole Text

- enable children to write daily
- provide contexts which encourage children to meet the needs of different situations and audiences appropriately
- refer to and discuss environmental print
- encourage children to provide links from one idea or event to the next, when writing or speaking
- encourage children to maintain topic focus when speaking or writing
- encourage children to get information from and draw simple diagrams to complement a text
- provide situations which will require children to predict, hypothesise, make topical connections, generalise, imagine and project into the feelings of others

F • discuss the meanings and usage of a variety of high-frequency suffixes and prefixes e.g. *tri...*, *re...*, *...est* etc.

• discuss simple base words and inflectional endings

G • develop the understanding that a word meaning depends upon placement in the sentence and the other words it is used with, e.g. turn it on, on the table, on fire

H • demonstrate how a well-chosen word can be substituted for a phrase, e.g. *ran very fast*, *raced*

2.1.4 Phonology and Graphophonics

B • encourage children to attempt to spell words

D • extend children's understanding of how the sounds which a letter represents (and vice versa) may vary according to the situation in which it is found

E • develop the ability to identify
  - letters and letter clusters which represent different sounds
  - sounds which are represented by different letters and letter clusters

F • provide activities which require manipulation of words and word parts

G • provide opportunities for children to play with words - puzzles, rhymes, riddles, crosswords etc.

I • teach children to maintain rhythm when chanting

J • teach children to echo rhythms, e.g. by clapping them out; and rhyming patterns by providing similar rhymes

K • teach children to identify words and phrases with the same rhythm, e.g. *pen-cil sharpen-er*, and *Les-ley Car-penter*

2.2 SPOKEN

B • integrate both spontaneous and prepared improvisation to develop student approaches to, and interpretation of, text

2.3 WRITTEN

2.3.1 Language in print

D • develop the understanding that printed materials may have
  - contents
  - indexes
  - chapters
  - copyright statements
  - date of publication
  - information about the author
  - publisher's logos etc

E • develop the understanding that in writing, pause and emphasis are signalled by punctuation

2.3.2 Spelling

A • accept plausible spelling inventions to represent unknown words

• encourage children to manipulate letters and letter clusters to form different words

B • encourage and reinforce accurate spelling of simple, high-frequency words

C • teach consonants and vowels

• develop an awareness of simple root words and inflectional endings to produce correct spelling

• develop a familiarity with many common patterns of spelling

D • teach children to look for and correct spelling errors in own written work

E • encourage children to use selectively a variety of resources to assist spelling

F • teach children to use simple techniques to learn to spell new words e.g. 'look, cover, write, check'

2.3.3 Punctuation

A • accept over-generalisations as children begin to differentiate between punctuation symbols

F • develop an understan
that non-fiction books
shelved in numerical o

(iii) Referen
- dictionc

A • continue to develop a
awareness of dictiona
their functions

B • teach children to use
personal dictionary to
and check spelling

• teach children to use c
mercial dictionary to f
word's first meaning

- atlases

A • develop the understar
how prominent featur
map are usually repre
e.g. to discern rivers fr
roads, land from sea

2.3.6 Newspapers

A • provide newspapers f
children to 'read'

B • draw attention to diffe
parts of a newspaper,
news, reports, enterta
television guide, adve
ments etc.

C • develop an awarenes
layout of a newspape
- headlines
- columns

2.3.7 Magazines

A • provide a range of m
for children to read

B • develop an awarenes
different types of mag
e.g. children's comics
and gardening maga

3 FORMS OF TEXT

3.1 SPOKEN AND WRITTEN

A • read a variety of narr
other texts to children
quently

B • develop the ability to
appropriate forms in
and spoken activities

C • develop the understar
that each form follow

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NEW SOUTH WALES

55 MARKET STREET, SYDNEY 2000
POSTAL ADDRESS
BOX 33 G P O , SYDNEY 2001
TELEPHONE (02) 561 8100
FAX (02) 561 8185

Ms Jo-Anne Beirne
Homeschoolers Australia Pty. Ltd.
PO Box 420
KELLYVILLE NSW 2153

Dear Ms Beirne

I refer to your letter concerning the legal responsibilities for the registration of homeschooling.

The Education Reform Act, 1990, is quite clear on the question of responsibility for the registration for homeschooling. Registration is approved by the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs following receipt of a report and recommendation from an authorised person. I have authorised officers from the Board of Studies to advise me on the quality of the educational programs which are presented following application for registration.

The matters concerning the case of "The Family" have now been resolved by the court system. Officers from the Department of Community Services are aware of the provisions under the Education Reform Act, 1990.

The NSW Government is committed to an effective education system which provides for all students. In this State, it includes public and private schooling and homeschooling. The Education Reform Act, 1990, provided the basis for a positive approach to homeschooling and this Government is committed to ensuring that this approach continues.

Yours sincerely

Virginia Chadwick
Minister for Education and Youth Affairs
Minister for Employment and Training

31 DEC 1992

As the court case concerning the Family drew to its settlement Homeschoolers Australia was nominated to supervise the educational program of the Family's children without prior consultation with either myself or the Board of Studies. Anna Adams and I were horrified by this option and objected in the strongest possible terms. We met much resistance from The Department of Community Services Official and even legal representatives who said that DOCS were being obliging rather than creating the dangerous precedent that we could see for the future, but we held on and won. We were so concerned that we wrote to the Minister for Education on the issue requesting that DOCS be informed about the wording of The Education Reform Act 1990 and the reality that DOCS had no right to appoint anyone to assess an educational program other than the Board of Studies. I have decided to publish this letter in the interests of precedent and so it can be used in the future should some further incursion into the education of registered homeschoolers be undertaken by D.O.C.S.

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Homeschoolers Australia
P.O. Box 420

HOMESCHOOLING ADVANTAGES & GOALS

1. One to one, or at least small group tuition.

(a) freedom to meet the diverse academic, emotional, psychological and social needs of the individual child;
(b) freedom to answer questions, pursue curiosity and special interests;
(c) enables a broad and diverse curriculum to be covered;
(d) prevents education burnout by allowing flexible scheduling;
(e) freedom to pursue the child's learning at their own rate;
(f) builds an atmosphere of trust in the capability of every child to achieve their own learning potential;
(g) facilitates flexible and efficient use of community educational resources.

2. Time to access a broad range of educational resources. In the wider community, we are not limited or constricted by the administrative, physical, expertise and economic boundaries of the classroom. Learning has real purpose. Access to the broad community as a valuable resource, lots of experience of the real world and the work of people in the real world.

3. More opportunity to recognise, explore and extend individual learning differences. For instance recognition and development of sport, intrapersonal, music and art intelligences as well as pursuing the schools' traditional mathematical and linguistic intelligences.

4. Formal education can be introduced at the right time. Research has shown that the readiness of individuals for "school-type" learning can be extremely variable.

5. Prevention of discrimination. Active attempts are made to balance the tendency to discriminate against boys in primary schools (many more primary aged boys are in learning difficulties classes than primary aged girls) and discriminate against girls through the secondary curriculum (keeping girls' confidence and interest high in maths and science and valuing their skills in history and English as highly as mathematics-science skills).

6. Harmony and continuity of values. Removal of the adverse pressure the peer group applies so often in schools e.g. the tendency to under age drinking, smoking, materialism, drugs & dishonesty The ability and will of parents to supply long term security, acceptance, understanding, support and values for their children. Home provides the best atmosphere (conditions) for acquiring a good sense of self-worth, competence, independence, sensitivity and sense of humour to deal with the realities of life.

7. Protects from overstimulation. School takes up too much time and energy, which is not effectively used and limits other activities. Homeschooled children's free time is not spent recovering from the overstimulation of school but in pursuing valuable learning for life.

8. Produces happier, more inquisitive and creative human beings and happier families.

9. Provides opportunity for self-evaluation and self-motivation on the basis of progress, potential and mastery.

Liberally interpreted from
GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING
MAGAZINE ISSUE 40
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Cambridge MA 02140 U.S.A.

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Homeschoolers Australia What's On?

JANUARY

* SYDNEY 24th January Homeschooling Seminar at Kellyville 1 - 5 p.m.

Cost $20 per family, $15 per family for those who have already attended one of our homeschooling seminars in the past. Topics covered include Resources, Socialization, Success, Experience. How do I homeschool? How structured should I be? How do I program & evaluate ? What is required of me, what books do I use? This event is definitely on, so if you are interested please contact Jo-Anne Beirne on 02 629 3727 for more details.

* CANBERRA 28th Jan

John Holt Book & Music Store & Raymond & Dorothy Moore books presentation and general homeschooling discussions at Weston Park. Contact Claire Powell 06 251 6663 for details. If raining Steve and Wendy Hodgman's house 27 Higginbotham St Watson contact 06 247 9358.

FEBRUARY

* SYDNEY 8th February

An attempt at a regular meeting for people with high school aged homeschoolers. If you would like to become part of a group of people who are interested in furthering the educational and social contacts of their high school aged children please contact Debbie Armanious for details 529 20 32

*** SYDNEY- Cataract Dam 28th February 1993** John Holt Book & Music Store & Raymond & Dorothy Moore book stall at Cataract Dam. This event has been totally organised, facilitated and promoted by Susan Dowey who is kindly letting us set up this stall. Please contact Susan on 046 311180 for details if you wish to attend this camp.

MARCH

*BRISBANE Sun 21st March

I will be in Queensland for the week and so have planned a Homeschooling Seminar with a few interested families. From 1-5 p.m. 84 Livesay Rd Bellbowrie. 07 2027642 if you would like to attendplease ring Greg or Kim- more details in the next newsletter.

* SYDNEY- COMPUTER WORKSHOP Sunday 28th March 10 a.m. -4 p.m.

See details inside this Australian Homeschool Journal, page 9. If you wish to register and find out more details contact Jo-Anne Beirne 02 629 3727 or Bill Chalker 02 4844680

APRIL

* SYDNEY 30th April Homeschooling Seminar at Kellyville 1 - 5 p.m.

Cost $20 per family, $15 per family for those who have already attended one of our homeschooling seminars in the past. Topics covered include Resources, Socialization, Success, Experience. How do I homeschool? How structured should I be? How do I program & evaluate ? What is required of me, what books do I use? If enough people are interested this event will be on. Please check beforehand and contact Jo-Anne Beirne on 02 629 3727 for more details.

Regular Homeschool Meetings at Kellyville

including SPORTS DAYS

*** Tuesday February 16th**

*** Tuesday March 16th**

*** Monday April 19th**

*** Tuesday May 18th.**

Bring Lunch and any games you think your kids might like to play. We have a parachute and we plan to do face painting with the younger children at the February 16th meeting (a donation towards costs required).Don't forget hats and sunblock !! Kellyville Park Memorial Drv Kellyville. Ring Jo-Anne Beirne 02 629 3727, Dodie Conway 02 6394858 for details.

If you have a special event national, state or local that you would like listed in this section please send us the details (allowing plenty of time for publication).

OTHER EVENTS

FEBRUARY

Cataract Dam Camp 26th - 28th February 1993

Contact Susan Dowey on 046 311180 for details if you wish to attend this camp.

MARCH

Queensland Home Educators Group Conference Brisbane 22nd-25th March

Contact Rachel Hearn for more details 075 436 451

JUNE

Central Queensland Get-Together (see this AHJ - Letters page 15 for more information) Send a non-refundable $5 deposit to Kathy Boles 2 Richard St Emu Park 4702 for more details or ring 079 396 213

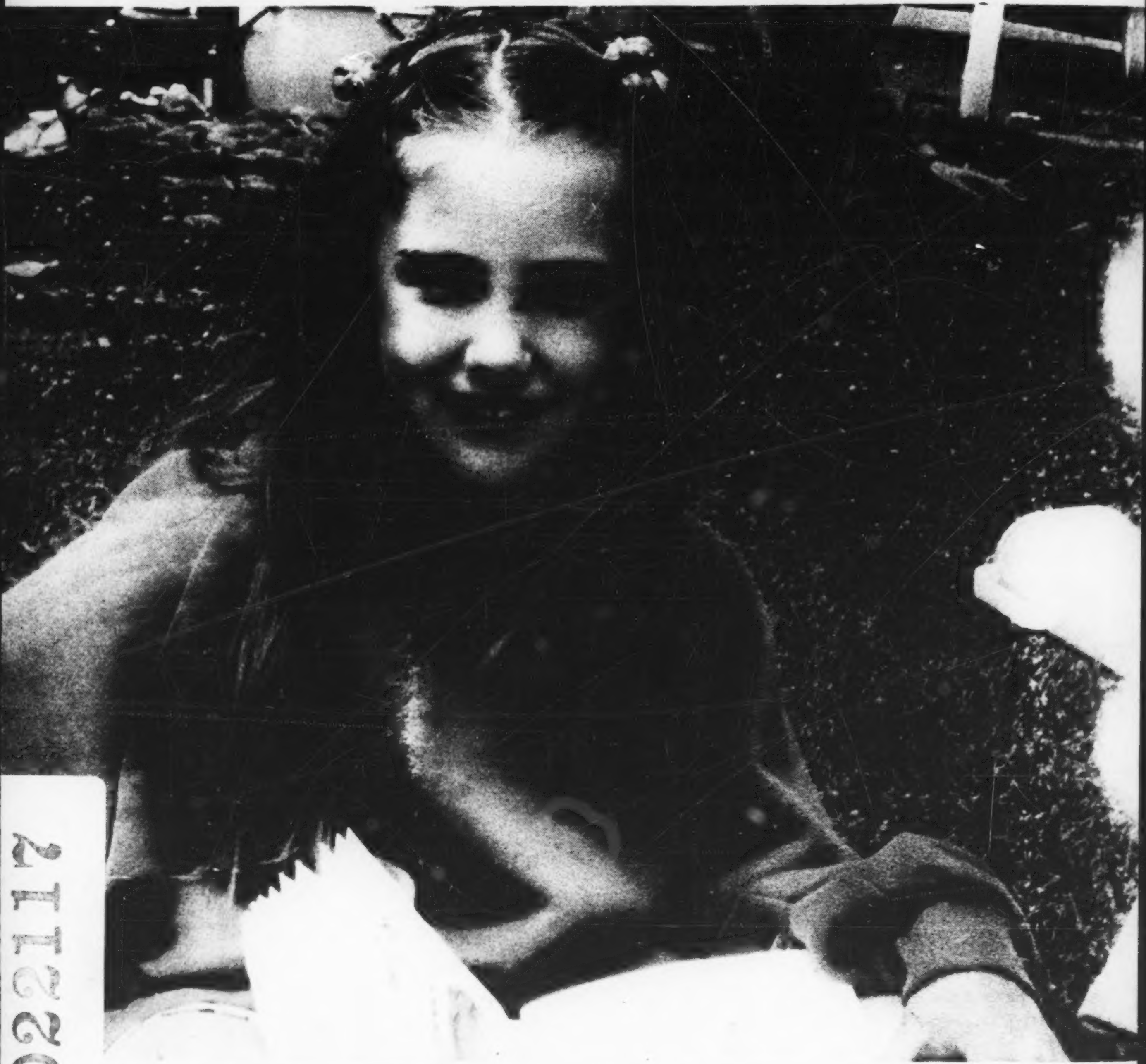
Happy Homeschooling

Australian Homeschool Journal

ISSUE 38

Publishers: Jo-Anne & Greg Beirne

Subscription to this journal is $30 for 6 issues to P.O. Box 420 Kellyville 2153



Ideas or opinions expressed in articles and letters are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editors and publishers of this journal.

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March/April 1993

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About the Editor

I am a 36 year old happily married woman, to my beloved (patient & enduring) husband Greg. We have always homeschooled our four children. Gregory is nearly 13, Rebecca 11 years, Stephen nearly 9 and Mary-Beth 3 years. We live about 45 kms from Sydney on a 5 acre block where we don't grow our own produce, have horses nor even chickens - we tried it but we just aren't farmers ! We try to support, encourage and challenge homeschoolers, with varying degrees of success, failure & reward. We are committed to information dissemination about the option of homeschooling so that others can learn about this important moral, social and academic alternative to traditional schooling.

Contributions to this journal are warmly welcomed.

CALLING ALL HOME-SCHOOLERS

I am planning to update the Support groups/individuals contact list for Issue 39 or 40 as I know many people have stopped their groups and/or ceased homeschooling, as well as other groups starting. IF YOU WANT TO BE LISTED as an individual or a group, anywhere in this great country, PLEASE INFORM US NOW Homeschoolers Australia P.O. Box 420 Kellyville 2153. Thank you.

From the Editors Desk

P.O. BOX 420 KELLYVILLE 2153

AN INVITATION-
I hope that you can take a spare moment to write and share with us your homeschooling anecdotes, experiences, hopes, fears and concerns. I would love to hear from you. You can only get better at writing if you practise!

DON'T FORGET 28th March 1993 The Computer Seminar ! Details are in What's On, page 10 this issue.

Queensland Conference
I shall be speaking at the Queensland Home Education Conference on Tuesday 23rd March on learning and on Wednesday 24th March re: the three Education Acts that we have lived under here in NSW. If you are coming to this conference, please introduce yourself as I am looking forward to meeting many homeschooling "pen- friends".

OOOOPS !!!
I feel rather stupid because in the last journal I printed that the next seminar about homeschooling is on the 30th April - BUT this day is a FRIDAY. I must have looked up the wrong month - I can't exactly blame the calendar! The next Sydney seminar is on the 18th April - sorry for any inconvenience.

John Holt Bookstore catalogues
We are presently awaiting a large order of books from the US , so in the next issue, Issue 39, we will be sending out another copy of our catalogue. If you want one in the meantime please ring us on 02 629 3727 and we'll post one straight away.

Q Stores
Q Stores have rung to ask me to remind people who have not settled their bills to do so. If you are one of these people, could you please attend to this ASAP so that the service is not cut out for all homeschoolers .

Publicity
Homeschooling has had great media coverage in the last couple of months, the families involved have done us all proud. (See this edition Home schoolers in the Media). It has also generated lots of inquiries to The Board of Studies in NSW & homeschooling organisations. If you do some media work please send it to us, as we would love to publish the details.

Libraries - Congratulations Ku-ring gai Municipal Library!
First, thanks to those people who have donated subscriptions of the Australian Homeschool Journal to their library. We are already getting calls from people who have found out about homeschooling in their library. Many people who cannot find any information on homeschooling in bookstores go to their local library. However many have no information on homeschooling. What to do? We are trying to get our updated information booklet Getting Started With Homeschooling onto the shelves in all NSW libraries (300). This is not easy because it is presently in pamphlet form - but we're working on it! Some wonderful & dedicated homeschoolers have been lobbying their local libraries to buy books about homeschooling. Librarians mostly do have a policy about ordering books that people request and so if you tell your librarian what you want you may well find it on your shelves sooner than you think. **Ku-ring gai Municipal Library** has ordered 20 homeschooling books from the John Holt Book & Music Store this week - so the homeschoolers in that shire have a great range to choose from including Hard Times in Paradise & Family Matters - two great sellers in the US at the moment. If you would like catalogues to give to your librarian please ring us on 02 629 3727 and I'll send you some and don't forget to ASK your librarian about books on homeschooling for your library soon.

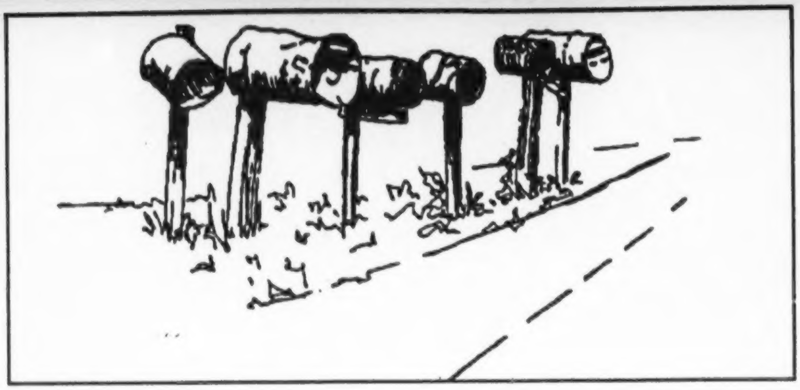
NSW Homeschooling Conference 'Open Network' day.
Following on the lead of the Victorians, the Queenslanders and Sue Dowey in NSW. A group of homeschoolers here in NSW have decided to facilitate an innovative conference on homeschooling in NSW based around an exploration of all the things homeschoolers already do with their children. We figure most homeschooling parents are experts in some field or another or have interests they would like to pursue/share with other homeschoolers. The aim of the unconference is not to listen to experts but to get "in touch" with the skills and experiences that are so plentiful in the homeschooling community. Anna Adams (02 8094676) would like to hear from you if you have any suggestions on the issue - there are more details inside this edition of the journal page 9.

NEXT ISSUE ....

Funding
I'd like homeschoolers to consider and write about the idea of funding for homeschooling. Issues you might like to think about would include loss of autonomy, regulation, how much, how often, equity and justice. See inside for more information about the Sales Tax issue.

Spreading the Word
Julia Boxx from Mudgee has written a superb article on practical ways of "spreading the word" about homeschooling, which I am looking forward to publishing. I also plan to include with the next edition - Issue 39 - an advertisement that can be placed in your local library or on a community noticeboard to help people get informed about the possibility of homeschooling. It's always exciting to talk to people who say "You mean it's legal?" "Why haven't I heard about it?". We had over 70 enquiries here at Homeschoolers Australia in the week ending 13th March 1993.

Letters Letters Letters



ANYONE FOR ITALIAN?

Jill Alroe, Gilgandra, NSW:
Is there any homeschoolers learning or speaking Italian? Joel (11) has been learning through Stott's Correspondence and would love someone to write and speak to in Italian. Our address is P.O. Box 233 Gilgandra, NSW 2827.

LEARNING DISABILITIES CONTACT

Robyn Tsapazi, Leeming, WA:
....I have enjoyed reading the journals and have found lots of valuable information. My daughter is learning disabled and because of this I seem to be about the only mother doing home tutoring with a disabled child. I would be grateful if you could pass my name on to others who may in the same position. In Perth I seem to be the only one. It would be good to exchange information and help problem solve if necessary. Keep up the good work. It is appreciated here in the West.

(**J.B.** I highly recommend the following books to anyone who wants to further investigate the area of learning disabilities, **The Learning Mystique** by Gerard Coles; **Learning Denied** by Denny Taylor and **Exploding the Myth of Learning Disabilities** by Susannah Sheffer)

DID YOU RECEIVE YOUR LETER FROM MR JOHN AQUILINA?

(**Ed** Many homeschoolers complained to Mr Aquilina, Dick Shearman and The Teachers Federation about their comments at the end of 1992 in an article written by Wayne Miller of the Telegraph Mirror. Everyone I know received the following replies.)

John Aquilina, NSW Shadow Minister for Education and Youth Affairs:
Many thanks for your letter. Generalizations such as are often found in media articles are bound to offend people such as yourself. I have no doubt that there are scores of parents such as yourself who have assessed all the alternatives and made a sound and logical decision concerning homeschooling. That decision also entails substantial dedication, commitment and sacrifice for your role as parent. I am equally convinced, however, that there are several parents for whom homeschooling is a "way out", an option which is not in the best interests of the children, either in the short term or long term.

ACCESSING COMMUNITY COURSES

Esther Nott, Wahroonga, NSW:
Thomas and I are enjoying a calligraphy course at the local (Waitara) Adventist Activities Centre in term #1 for two hours each Tuesday afternoon. We are very pleased we persuaded the organisers to accept Thomas as he is only 10.

We attribute our success to swift action in phoning one of the organisers and turning up early on registration day and the approachability of the church representative in question.

CATHOLIC NEWSLETTER

I am also writing a newsletter to factilitate communication between orthodox Catholics in NSW -"Keeping In Touch". Subscription is $10 per annum (6 issues) Esther Nott, 21 Edwards Rd Wahroonga NSW 2076.

HIGH SCHOOL HOMESCHOOLING CONTACTS

Fabienne Durdin, Nong Khai, Thailand:
Thank you very much for your letter and suggestions. You are a real gold mine of information about homeschooling. We found books about taking the SAT and the ACT in Bangkok when we visited there last year (quite a number of Thai students go to the USA for tertiary and /or post graduate studies). Also, a friend in the USA has been sending us a bit of information about colleges there. We were very encouraged by the information you provided about tertiary opportunities in Australia.

......My eldest son Marc (16 now) is very keen on a career involving computers and he has become extremely proficient in programming as a result of working alongside my husband John whose work here consists mainly of program development for linguistics applications, as well as consulting for other aid organisations. John and Marc have been developing a dictionary database program for use with South-East Asian languages.

As I prepared for this year's homeschooling I realised how difficult it can be to avoid falling back into a "schoolroom" approach, especially after dealing with two years of correspondence lessons for the older ones. Do you know of anyone who is homeschooling at upper high school level (or better yet someone who has done it) with whom I could exchange ideas?

.......I'll try to get the writers and illustrators in our family to contribute to the AHJ. As members of SIL, John and I have to get anything for publication checked by our director, so it would be more complicated for us to contribute. May the Lord bless you with the wisdom, grace and strength you need in the months ahead.

HELPFUL SEMINARS

Julia Boxx, Mudgee NSW:
I want to thank you for the workshop in January in Sydney. It was well worth our time, money and effort to attend. Being still relatively new to homeschooling, we learned a good deal about resources available, different approaches and issues which need our further careful thought. I admire your enthusiasm and dedication to home schooling. Your efforts with the Journal and these workshops are a valuable resource to homeschooling families. It would be terrific if you were able to get up our way for a workshop - perhaps Lithgow, Bathurst or Katoomba. I'm sure you would have a large number of people attending. And to you, Greg our thanks too. I know there's a lot of "behind the scenes" work to make these meetings successful. Your efforts weren't unnoticed by us either.
(**JB**: I will be in Bathurst for a country seminar and to show books from The John Holt Book and Music Store and The Moores on Sunday May 16th in the large room of theEducation Resource Centre Cnr George & Rocket Sts Bathurst. If anyone would like to attend the seminar and meet other country homeschooling families on the day please contact Marcelle Foundling for more details 063 322 132.)

Sue Elvis, Unanderra, NSW
Thank you for a very interesting seminar. It is always good to get together with other homeschooling families. I always come home with lots of renewed enthusiasm. After the seminar, I was able to put the finishing touches to my programme for Felicity. John Miller, from the Board of Studies, visited us last Tuesday. Felicity enjoyed this visit immensely. My program was fine and we have a two year registration. What a relief that it is all over! .....I always enjoy reading the Journal and appreciate all your hard work that goes into it.

Denise Traynor, Chisholm, ACT
Joshua is 14 years old and this is the first school year he has been homeschooling. Joshua breeds mice and does gymnastics and athletics. He wrote "The Mouse" poem for the newsletter. Thank you Jo-Anne for your wonderful presence, advice and support on your recent trip to Canberra - it was terrific. The books I purchased have been most helpful - different perspectives and practicalities, etc. I am enjoying the newsletter enormously and learning constantly. Many Thanks.
(**JB** You will find Joshua's great poem accompanying the article Children's Diaries)

Drew Corrigan, Bonython ACT
We were so pleased to be able to meet you in person when you visited Canberra back in January. We thoroughly enjoyed our conversation and appreciated the opportunity to look through the books you brought down. Thank you so much for the copies of GWS you sent. We have been most impressed with the magazine and will be ordering a set of back issues from the US soon.
I haven't forgotten my promise to review the two books by David Lewis ("How to be a Gifted Parent" and "Mind Skills") nor have I forgotten to write up my own experiences in self-directed learning. I have started work on one of the reviews. As I have been working on it I noticed with interest that Mr Lewis cites a couple of works by John Holt, so there appears to be some commonality of thought between the two. When we were discussing your son's interest in "Logo" and computer networks such as the "Internet" it occurred to me that a brief introduction to these kind of facilities (and what they offer inquisitive homeschoolers) might be of interest to your readers. So I will also write up an overview of such services in the form of an article for you to use as well.
Please be patient with expecting these items from me. Things are terribly busy here (at the A.N.U. where I work) with the start of the academic year. In addition, we are endeavouring to start a couple of home-based businesses. So, it may be a month or more before I can devote a lot of time to writing. For your interest I have enclosed several newspaper items from a recent Canberra Times. Sad to say nowhere is homeschooling suggested as a solution (in whole or in part) for the various problems identified.

Alanya Sutcliffe, Penrith, NSW, Distance Education Support Unit:
I am writing to thank you and the other homeschoolers for the welcome you extended me last Sunday at your Sydney Region seminar. The seminar was very informative and dispelled a few doubts and misconceptions I had held. I was especially impressed by the sincerity of the presenter and practitioners and I support and commend our common objective of providing the most appropriate learning environment for each child in New South Wales.

AHJ- COMMENTS

Jackie Stibbard, Blacktown, NSW:
Thank you very much for all your wonderful work in providing a first-class journal for Homeschoolers in Australia. I always look forward in anticipation for the next issue to arrive in the mail, and I spend the next few days being totally encouraged and inspired by every article.

Louise Murphy, Lurnea, NSW:
.... I enjoyed all the issues last year and look forward to getting the AHJ in '93 .

Lynda Hatfield,Quinindi , NSW:
We are really appreciating the Journal - thanks again for your efforts.
After three terms at High School Monty decided that he wasn't particularly enjoying having to learn a lot of things that weren't of interest to him, he found it difficult coping with teachers who had no respect for the students and felt there was a lot of wasted time. Socially he had a wonderful time much to the surprise of the headmaster who was sure he would have great difficulties in that area.

Susan Lacoba, Camperdown, NSW:
Thanks for all your work on the AHJ. ....I have almost read "In Their Own Way"(Armstrong) a book reviewed in the journal recently. I have found it so helpful that I would like my own copy.

Janet Christopherson, Northbridge, NSW
....Thanks for the information and

AHJ! The success of homeschooling and degree of recognition is a credit to your dedication.

Teresa Stevenson, Jimboomba Qld
....Thank you for that well-worded letter you sent as a suggestion concerning the correspondence school. I hit a very low spot at the end of last year......I'm on an up now. We had an anti-clutter campaign and giant spring clean that's almost done plus a few really relaxing days off. I will homeschool Phil this year too without correspondence because I'm convinced we can do better. However, I still worry about the legal side. Circumstances permitting I'd like to meet you when you are up in March. I would like to purchase two interesting science books advertised in the magazine "More Science Experiments You Can Eat" and "The Flying Circus of Physics with Answers". Thank you once again for the work you do for us. I really do appreciate it.

HOW CHILDREN LEARN

Stephen Ward, Sussex Inlet
I apologise for the delay in returning your book "Compelling Belief" to you. Arons does raise some interesting ideological questions in those middle chapters. The impact was not the same, however, as "How Children Learn" by Holt (which I read at the same time). It was much more accessible, challenging the heart as well as the head. I had an interesting discussion with my history tutor last semester. He is an ex-high school teacher now vigorously opposed to compulsory education and has many horror stories of class room failures, to support his assertions.

Your reply to the study being done on homeschooling by Hunter from Griffith University was an accurate and challenging chastisement of institutional incompetence. I think you are right not to let the idea of homeschooling be patronised or demeaned by academics who have no real empathy with the convictions that lead a parent to make the decision to teach their children at home and who inadvertently don't show the respect they need to. Plus I think this decision needs to be seen as a rational, intelligent alternative to institutional education, not an idiosyncratic social aberration, and one way to facilitate this re-education process is to demand a high level of respect and accountability which I think your reply did.

AMERICAN PEN - FRIENDS

Joyce Dielschneider, Iowa, USA
We live in the Mid-West of the United States, in the state of Iowa. We are homeschooling our three boys, ages 12, 10 and 7. Our ten year old, Adam would like to write to someone in Australia. Could you give us the address of a boy his age that would be interested in having a pen-pal? I got your name from the Moore foundation as a contact person for home school in Australia. I hope you can help us out! thank you very much. The address would be: Adam Dielschneider, R.R.I. Box 66, Beaman, IA, 50609

Mali Sastri, Lexington, Mass. US
Hi! I'm a sixteen year old homeschooler from America and I'm very interested in the country of Australia. I'm hoping to visit sometime soon, but in the meantime, would like as much information on the country as possible. In particular, I love adventure and Australia seems to have so much to offer in this area - bushwalking, the Outback -Oh! I hope I can come! Anyway, a friend of mine suggested writing to homeschoolers or homeschooling groups such as yours to see if you had any information on organized tours or adventures. As a homeschooler, this is a golden opportunity for me, and I would thrill to take advantage of it. If you have any information, it would be deeply appreciated. Thank you so much! Mali Sastri, 10 Bicentennial Drive, Lexington, MA 02173. USA

Roberta Pietila, Deming Washington US.
...I am a fifteen year old homeschooler, living in the United States. Pretty soon I will be done with my homeschool education and I would like to attend college in Australia.

....if there are any girls my age (15 or around there) who would like a pen-pal, please feel free to give them my address. I love to write and it would be great to have a friend in the country I love so much. (I have been there twice and did not want to leave either time!)

I live in the country secluded by forests all around. My life is pretty much peaceful and quiet, my "school" system very relaxed. I go to a tutor for Alegbra and English grammar/composition once a week. I also take choir (I am an accompianist for a choir) and driver's education at our local public school. I have been playing the piano for 8 years. My interests include music, cultural anthropology, tennis, aviation, writing and spending time with my lovely mother. Please write back and tell me all about your system of schooling. I am very interested in learning all about it. And, besides receiving mail is exciting! Especially mail from Australia. Thanks a lot! 55616 Williams Lake Rd, Deming Washington 98244 US.

GROWTH IN THE WOLLONGONG REGION

Julie Pinazza, Mt Kembla, NSW
... We have four new families homeschooling around Wollongong that I know of this year. Three of those four have spent some time with us getting their programs organised and are now delighted to have two year registrations. We're looking forward to an exciting year of learning together. ....Thank you again for editing and producing such a professional publication for us.

GROWTH IN THE NEWCASTLE REGION

Carolyn Arthur, Beresfield.
Please find enclosed our Newcastle newsletter. We have grown to 30 families this year!

GROWTH IN THE SOUTHERN TABELANDS

Margaret Stone, Moss Vale
Here is the first family newsletter. We are 15 families here in Moss Vale this year !

HAPPY & SUCCESSFUL HOME EDUCATED STUDENTS

LeAnn Bae, Castle Hill, NSW

First, I want to thank you, Jo-Anne, for your dedication to Homeschooling because it has paved the way for me and many others to enjoy the freedom of being with our children and rearing them as we see fit. Secondly, I'm writing to make my contribution relating to this precious freedom. I'm a mother of 4 children who are being homeschooled - 12, 10, 8 and 6 so after 2 years, has homeschooling been a success?

Well, let's see what can these kids do?

1. 2 of them can do Chinese painting.
2. 2 of them can play a decent game of tennis and 2 swing pretty well for their age.
3. 4 of them have won ballet scholarships.
4. they have been featured in local newspapers for their ballet achievements.
5. 2 of them have done TV work including an anti-smoking segment for the Life Education programme.
6. 2 of them can do the family shopping including comparison shopping to get the best prices.
7. they can all read, write and do math to their grade level or above.
8. They can all sew with a sewing machine which they love to do and they can embroider too. They do lots of craft and love it.
9. They love all kinds of theatre including Shakespeare.
10. They love all kinds of music -classical as much as rock.
11. they love telling jokes to their friends and can work together with them to create and act out plays.
12. They adore history and science - educational TV such as Beyond 2000 and Behind the News are quite enjoyed by them as was Henry V.

13 The people they like to interact with are of all ages and either sex.

14. They can play together for hours & seldom fight; they can resolve fights by themselves when they happen.

15. They can recognise a good teacher and a suppressive one so their self-esteem will likely not falter should they have to associate with a downtone type person who is a teacher, boss, friend or work-mate.

So have we given these children a great gift? Sure have. Can't beat a beautiful, sunny day on the back verandah, books in hands, sisters to enjoy, parents around, subjects of interest to research on, results to produce, chores to handle and self-esteem intact.

Suzie Hammond McGraths Hill NSW

I thought that a chronicle of the kinds of things my kids do might inspire some others to tell us what their kids are up to.

Our children have established a wildly long list of things they are interested in. Which, although impressive sounding, keeps their parents in the poor house. Since we get formal lessons out of the way early in the day and schedule in all sorts of external classes they don't get tired out the way a lot of other schooled kids are when they get home. At the moment we have a ballerina (Althea) and an actor (Jordan) in the house.

Althea is now 13 1/2 and has been dancing fairly seriously for about 5 years.Like other parents we made the rounds of music, gymanstics, etc. But she seems to have settled on the intention of becoming a world class prima ballerina, and she bends a great deal of energy towards this goal. She has formal lessons in dance for a total of about 15 hours a week now and she dances in eisteddfods and goes to holiday schools and summer schools during every term break. Her eisteddfod totals are reaching close to 200 hundred placings with many championships and scholarships in addition.

The thing that is most important about all this is her attitude towards the competitions. The winning of a first, second, or third place has little, if any impact, the adjudicators comments in terms of what he perceived about her actual dancing and the disection of the video afterwards are the things that count. Did she actually dance well? Was it a better performance than the one last month? Has she truely fixed that awkward transition step in the middle? These are the important things to her. Additionally, eisteddfods and master classes are all used to become thoroughly used to dancing under any, and all, conditions and not being worried about any sort of audition process.

Jordan, our young actor, has fought a hard battle to get good at something he loves as well. Like his sister there was no natural talent for what he wanted to do. Like her again, all his gains have been through hard work alone. He takes drama classes during the week and practises scenes out of his favorite movies for hours. (Not being one to miss an opportunity we got out the 1989 Kenneth Branagh version of Henry V. Jordan was delighted with the drama, battles and the languague of the whole thing. He now uses all these Shakespearean passages for his auditions when they ask him to do something. We also spent weeks immersed in English history, from how many feathers Henry ordered to feather the arrows he took to France, to what happened to him and his successor. We wrote a letter to K. Branagh and received a signed copy of the screenplay from the movie-that was English studies for one week.)

This huge amount of interest and consequent work on his part have paid off. In the past six months he has been in a feature movie that is going to the Cannes Film Festival this year, an international Japanese commercial, episodes of GP and several educational videos including one that all NSW school students will see about the library and another for the Life Education Units that go to the schools. It's not really important whether or not he decides to become an actor when he grows up, but the learning and self discipline that he gains now by getting good at something he enjoys is superb.

Lest you think that they are monodimensional people let me also mention that they have both won awards for their artistic efforts, Althea with her pastel still life and calligraphy work and Jordan for his pottery and dancing. Both have had their letters and work published in newspapers and both are avid about writing letters of complaint to companies that don't fulfill their commitments or harm the environment.

Children have tremendous amounts of energy and wide interests. Our experience has been that if they are encouraged, not pushed, they achieved more than we expected, and in a wider area than we had anticipated. Let's hear from the rest of you!

GETTING STARTED WITH HOMESCHOOLING

Megan Gosling, Cobar, NSW.

Thanks for all the work you and others have put into Getting Started with Homeschooling. My husband, Bill, and I have a little boy, Jamie, 14 months and our second baby due in July. We've both been reading up on our educational philosophies, in particular homeschooling, for the past couple of years since meeting a family here (who've since moved on but are still close friends) who were very keen on homeschooling. We both believe this is the way we will educate our children, at least initially, now that we have looked into it ourselves.

Most of the material we've got hold of has been of American origin and we're now looking to becoming more aware of what's happening here in Australia. I've been encouraged several times coming across your name in media interviews etc. and in reading newsletters from friends. You and your family are obviously doing a lot for the homeschool movement in Australia - especially in helping it to be recognised as a serious and responsible alternative to the present school system. Again ...thank you. Hope you find plenty of encouragement in your efforts.

HAVING THE COURAGE TO TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS ABOUT YOUR CHILDREN AND THEIR LEARNING

Julie & Darren Higgins, Mirabooka, NSW

We are Chrisitans and the parents of five precious children from the age of 5 down. I have been in contact with other families and I started to feel how different I wanted our approach to be....Our eldest child is a very sociable, outgoing athletic and bright little girl who really enjoys her younger siblings. At times she's a bit restless so I now occasionally sit down with her and "write", draw, colour, cut and paste etc. mostly on an afternoon while the other children rest. She enjoys these times! .. Darren and I believe in giving our children freedom and time to explore and play in their world without too much structure or parental organisation. ...I have read and researched different authors on the subject - mostly the Moores, John Holt, Dobson, and any article that came our way. We've been to two of your seminars, met other families and believe in the 'serendipity approach' i.e. wait and search for those moments when the child is ready to learn and assist in the process. This type of approach takes lots of courage as people ask: "Why aren't you doing this, that or whatever with the kids, why can't your child read, write, spell, etc. Why aren't you doing school-at-home, workbooks, drills in phonics, maths and language?"

I feel, rather than spend hours drilling on phonics and teaching all the rules of spelling/language, why not wait till the child is really ready? What are the 'ready' signs? Well, I'm not sure yet. But as loving and caring parents, we'll see the signs. To me living is learning. So much of what is done in the home can be integrated or expanded into the learning process. By taking this approach and encouraging my children with their various interests and talents, by being with them, taking them where I go and allowing them freedom to grow, I believe they will be educated. We are accumulating our resources, now - encyclopaedias, science books charts, maps, story books, crafts teaching aids, manuals, (actually, books, books, books). We believe in our kids, we believe in their in-built natural desire to learn. By providing a broad spectrum of resources, by exposure to various activities and the home and by creating a loving, stress-free educationally enthusiastic home-life - how could children not learn?

......But all ideas might sound good and they might work for other families, but will they work for us? But I feel a more structured approach would create for me and my family "burn-out"....Will a more unstructured approach find favour with BOS inspectors? ...I think of one of your recent articles in your journal: our job is to ward off the critics and protect the child so they can have the space to grow and be educated.

So I guess we need reassurance - will it work for us? Will we gain a registration without having a really structured programme?..... We appreciate families are different, variations in homeschooling are enormous but really are homeschoolers mostly really structured or do some take a more unstructured approach?

(**JB**: Yes it will work for you! Any parents who so obviously devote so much time and attention to thinking and reading about what they should do with their children will undoubtedly provide a most positive and beneficial learning environment for them. No teacher in any school system could possibly care about or devote the attention to your children that you do because they have so many administrative, time and financial constraints. Raymond Moore writes of a study of over a thousand schools matched against over a thousand homeschools. Its conclusions were that in the very best schools the best teachers gave on average 7 minutes of individualised time to each child in a week whereas the average homeschoolig mother gives 70 minutes of individualised time in a DAY! That means when your children are ready to read or need your time and attention you will give it to them appropriately. Sure plenty of children learn by drilling, but plenty of children learn without drilling. Schools do not have a monopoly on knowledge nor the ability to teach it. It seems such a shame to incorporate instruction based teaching as it is in the schools into the home - go with your heart !)

SETTING UP YOUR OWN CURRICULUM

S.T. Perth WA :
I am interested in buying a homeschool curriculum for homeschooling for one year, my children are 7 and 9 years. I was wondering in particular whether there is a homeschool curriculum where the information is set out in a progressive manner with worksheets or something similar for each subject area. I already have an education syllabus for most subject areas from the education department but this is difficult to follow at present as it only presents ideas rather than specific exercises that build on previous lessons.

The above is a common example of letters we regularly receive, following is our typical reply)

Here at Homeschooler's Australia, we do not believe that a progressive work sheet curriculum program is the most effective nor efficient method for teaching children. Sometimes this approach may work in schools but it cannot be superior to the best possible curriculum - that designed by the loving & committed parents. This type of individualised curriculum is based on the parents' knowledge about their own child, sharing of the skills and knowledge that already exist and are useful in that family, extending the family's knowledge into areas that interest either the children, parents or both, in a way that suits the family.

Any curriculum purchased with 'worksheets', that has information organised in a sequential, progressive manner, cannot and does not allow for the individual learning variations of people who have different historical experiences and different ways of processing information. What use is it to a child who lives and works on a farm to spend valuable time filling in a social studies worksheet topic on "farms"? A program designed by the parent can take advantage of the particular knowledge of the child. For example if your child has a great love for history, this can be used to broaden and deepen knowledge in other areas from maths to literature and music or art.

In designing your own curriculum, parents must really devote time to deciding exactly what type of education they want for their child and what form it is going to take. They are able to allocate appropriate time to specific learning areas. Your child may well need more help and time in reading or maths, as a committed parent you are going to make sure this is exactly what they get. An individualised program allows you to respond to the reality of your family, emphasising your own and your child's needs and preferences.

NAMING SUPPORT GROUPS

Barbara Braathen, Naremburn NSW

Thank you for your informative and supportive journal. It is a valuable resource for those grappling with what can be a very steep learning curve. I have also heard positive feedback from those who have the Resource Book and "Getting Started" package.

It is probably fair to say that there are as many reasons for homeschooling as homeschoolers. Some, like me, have decided from their children's birth that it is simply the best education you can buy. Some see it as the only way to provide special attention for their children's individual needs, whether they be gifted or have particular learning difficulties. Others remove their children from the system in great dismay at the service they are receiving. There is another group, for whom their religion is the driving force, and yet another who, whilst their religion is an important part of their lives, base their programs on educational values alone. Our reasons for doing things are important to us, and dictate the type of support we look for from our families, friends and support groups. While I do think it is important to state that the common bond for all homeschoolers must be a quality education for our children, facilitating friendships and sharing resources depends very much on those individual reasons for homeschooling.

Over the last year I have gained the impression that there is room for another support group in Sydney - cityside. The philosophies of this group I would see as being education driven, family-centred, holistic. If anyone would be interested in such a support group and feel they would like to share resources, philosophies, literature, science material, and possible social contact for their children please contact, in the first instance, Barbara Braathen on 02 436 2057. I would be prepared to co-ordinate initial enquiries, put people in touch, organise a meeting, or whatever is appropriate. I would be grateful if you could list this group on your contact list. It would be good if other groups could furnish you with similar information .

(JB You're exactly right Barbara. In homeschooling there are a very diverse group of people from a huge range of religions, philosophies, educational and ethnic backgrounds. Some homeschoolers are delighted to meet anywhere or anytime with anyone. Others prefer to meet with people who are more closely aligned with their thinking. I am happy to publish information about individuals or support groups, meeting particular or general needs, that happen anywhere in Australia.)

CALLING ALL SUPPORT GROUPS **- I am planning to update the Support groups contact list for Issue 39 or 40 as I know many people have stopped their groups and/or ceased homeschooling, as well as other groups starting. IF YOU WANT TO BE LISTED as an individual or a group, anywhere in this great country, PLEASE INFORM US NOW Homeschoolers Australia P.O. Box 420 Kellyville 2153. Thank you.**

What's On

MARCH

* Queensland Home Education Conference March 22nd to 25th

It's not too late! Contact Rachael Hearn on 075 436 451 or just turn up at Greenwood Conference Center, Eaton Hills $7.50 per night per person. 22nd March 2 p.m. - 25nd Mar 1 p.m.

* Computer Workshop Sunday 28th March

10 a.m. -4 p.m. Self-help displays of computer hardware & software If you wish to register and find out more details contact Jo-Anne Beirne 02 629 3727 or Bill Chalker 02 4844680

APRIL

* Seminar

Sydney 18th April 1993

Homeschooling Seminar at Kellyville Sports Centre, Memorial Drive, Kellyville 2153. 1 - 5 p.m. Cost $20 per family, $15 per family for those who have already attended one in the past. Topics covered include Resources, Socialization, Success, Experience. How do I homeschool? How structured should I be? How do I program & evaluate ? What is required of me, what books do I use? If you are interested you must contact to RSVP. Jo-Anne Beirne 02 629 3727.

* Monday April 19th

Regular homeschool meeting at Kellyville Park, Memorial Drive Kellyville. Sports & general activities. Bring lunch, games, balls etc. We have a parachute and do face painting with the younger children (a donation towards costs required). Don't forget hats, lunch and sunblock. Ring Jo-Anne Beirne 02 629 3727, Dodie Conway 02 6394858 for details.

MAY

* Seminar

Sunday May 18th.

Homeschooling Seminar at Bathurst E.R.C. cnr George St Bathurst. 1 - 5 p.m. Cost $20 per family, $15 per family for those who have already attended one of our homeschooling seminars in the past. Topics covered could include Resources, Socialization, Success, Experience. How do I homeschool? How structured should I be? How do I program & evaluate ? What is required of me, what books do I use? If you are interested you must contact to RSVP. Jo-Anne Beirne on 02 629 3727 or local contact Marcelle Foundling on 063 322 132

JUNE

Central Queensland Homeschooling Get Together, 7-14 June 1993.

Send a non-refundable $5 deposit to Kathy Boles 2 Richard St. Emu Park 4702 for more details ring 079 396 213. The aim is to get to know and support each other and have a good time.

OCTOBER

Possible ?? NSW Homeschooling Conference

Aim networking, so that we can share ideas, skills and information. Venue - to be decided. Cost to be decided. If you want to put ideas down or discuss it or be a part of making it happen please ring or write to (PO Box 420 Kellyville) Jo-Anne on 02 629 3727.

Family Newsletters for kids by kids

Three years ago at a homeschooling meeting the suggestion was made that one good way to keep our kids in contact was to have them prepare a homeschooling newsletter of their own that was sent out to other homeschooling families on a once a year basis. For example 24 families in the group means that each family can expect to hear every fortnight from another family about what is happening in their lives. The cost works out at about $25 once a year and this amount includes envelopes, postage, photocopying etc. All the homeschoolers we know have used their newsletter "turn" as an opportunity to learn new skills and crystalise and share what they are doing in their homeschooling. Some kids have told us about their hobbies and others about their animals, art, music or sport achievements.

We've really enjoyed getting our family newsletters and each year a different family takes responsibility for getting the first one out and the list starts again. Sue McAulay, Margaret Stone and Catherine Errey have taken turns at this job. (In '92 Catherine started a second newsletter group for younger kids).

Ros Lazar, Bathurst mother of Elizabeth 10 and Peter 8 has volunteered to set up another network in 1993. If you would like to join this newsletter tree - compiled by kids for kids, please ring Ros on 063 334 736 or send her a self addressed stamped envelope and she will send you the list when it is ready.

Children & Diaries

Jo-Anne Beirne

Many times in our homeschooling careers we have gone down the path of diary writing. When the children were first writing we encouraged them to keep records of what they were doing based around pictures that they drew accompanied by short sentences. Often we would take a picture of a Lego village or a huge sandcastle they had made and add it to the diary. It was very much a togetherness project because they needed help forming words and sentences. They needed to ask about spelling and they needed lots of admiration and encouragement.

Some days we didn't bother, of course, and other days there was so much to write. From an education standpoint it was an interesting and practical way to watch my children's many linguistic skills develop. You could see them venture into more difficult words and sentences; you could see that learning was rarely linear or sequential, that something might be a problem for a good deal of time and then all of sudden, there would be a burst and so much would be achieved. Often if a child had information pouring out and no time to get it all down, I would write it for them while they dictated.

Mostly we were learning about our history. The things that were important to us right that day and things that used to be important and things that would be coming up. At that stage I didn't attempt to make it a review of the previous day's activities but used more of an "issues" approach. We saw a lizard or the birds were digging up worms on the lawn or "To-day I read the Alfie books". My children usually got great satisfaction out of looking back on their "work", and would often say disbelievingly " I never spelt 'could' like that (cld) in my life" - how things change !

We tried not to make the diary a "battleground" which is why our children's diaries often have gaps (better to use a beautifully covered exercise book than a daily dated type of diary - where "gaps" really look obvious - and can be depressing). For us the real reasons for writing diaries included expanding their facility with, and love of, writing and reading; and developing their confidence in themselves and their skills. Although when the teacher in me really took hold in the early days I sometimes forced on my children daily diary writing - citing "discipline". I came to realise that being a prison officer in my own home is neither pleasant nor productive and rather defeats the purpose of inspired personal writing and enjoyable learning.

As the children got older we tried different approaches according to their needs and interests. When buying diaries with our children we soon learned to take into account how much they will write - a scribe will need lots of space, as will someone who likes to illustrate their work. A child who doesn't really enjoy writing very much may feel comfortable and less daunted by a small space or may like a theme diary on Australian history, Cricket or one from the Australian Conservation Foundation so that they can detour into some other information while they are contemplating what they wish to write.

What the author of the diary and the parent want written in the diary can sometimes be a really big issue. If the parent visualises a "publishable document" and the child a list of activities " I played soccer, I mowed the lawn, did some maths and read a book" there is probably going to be a hassle unless some negotiation takes place. What has to be decided is the relative importance of this diary. For younger children it cannot really take the place of the mother's record of homeschooling unless both parent and child use the same document. For older children sometimes it can, but this needs to be discussed with the child.

If you are expecting that your child will, for example, keep a list of all the books they are reading and perhaps, even some comment on content, author etc. you could gently remind them of their responsibility in this area and the fact that it is time-saving for you if they faithfully keep this list-freeing up your time for other things. Some children like to use diaries in a very personal way - and not share the results, if this is the case you need to discuss this and be aware of their need for privacy.

Every year the reasons for diary writing have changed for us especially as our children have grown. Skill development is not necessary in children who read and write compe-

MOUSE

The mouse runs in a trundle wheel,
the sweeping breeze at his heels.
He exits the wheel to rest his feet,
picks up his food and begins to eat.
With the food in his jaws tightly clamped,
he quickly scurrys up the ramp.
He sits upon his nest of straw,
he feels vibrations from the bottom floor.
Back down the ramp he trots with grace,
through the glass is his owners face.
She lifts the glass and puts in her hand,
the mouse runs swiftly back up the ramp.

Joshua Traynor

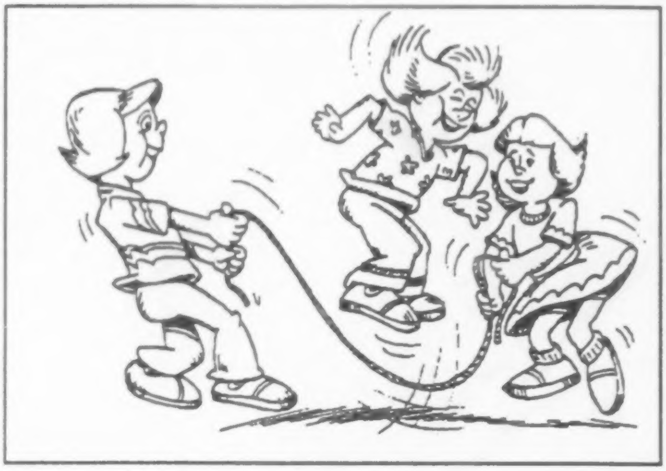
tently already but I still like the idea of diary writing. Over the holiday period I realised that I wanted my children to be aware of all the education they were getting in their lives, not just the "traditional" learning type things we do.

We had a big discussion where I explained to them that when they ask questions they are actually educating themselves and that this learning and the research necessary to satisfy their curiosity has a most valuable place in our homeschool. For some weeks my eight year old would ask one of his many questions through the day and soon afterwards "Is that educational enough to go in the diary?". It really made all of us really aware that even conversations "Why are they fighting in Bosnia?" can lead to some interesting learning.

DO YOU MAKE THEM WRITE?

When I talk with people about diary writing they have often agreed with me that when it is happening it all goes really well but getting them started is often difficult. I often found that diary writing was postponed in our house until bed time. This was my pet hate. When I have had a long day children sitting around composing diaries and asking questions late at night is not always my idea of fun - especially if the time gets spun out. So this year our new innovation for diary writing is that it is done before breakfast. One side of me feared that this would mean a rush job, but quite the contrary has happened. When the writing starts they become really focused and time is not important to them. Definitely it is a good impetus for completing the task.

Before you say but my children "won't write" I need to say that two of my children (while great readers) are not at all keen on writing. On the other hand one loves to write. I'm not going to say that I think diary writing improves their interest in other types of writing as that has not been our experience, though it may do so for some other children. Though when it becomes a regular activity it does seem to provide an impetus in itself. The only ulterior motive is that the children have a record of at least some of the very diverse interests that they pursue in their daily lives and that they learn to be aware that education is something you decide to do for yourself.



An Ideas Diary

Helen Hegener

One of the most valuable journals a homeschooler can keep is an ideas book. Homeschooling families are a curious lot. We ask many questions, and have even more ideas. We can't possibly remember it all, so what appeared brilliant yesterday afternoon can quickly be forgotten in our busy lives.

Writers, inventors, and farmers keep sketchbooks to help them in their work. Thomas A. Edison used notebooks to improve the designs of his inventions. The artist and inventor Leonardo da Vinci kept notebooks throughout his life.

You and your family can begin your own idea books with spiral notebooks. Art supply stores sell a variety of different sketchbooks. Some people prefer unlined paper, and others like graph paper.

Idea books are filled with images and thoughts from our daily life. You can jot down a book a friend recommended or draw a picture of the back seat of your car as you run about town on errands. You can sketch a floor plan for re-arranging the living room. Write down the details for the home made math game you read about last week. Copy down fragments of an interesting conversation overheard in the grocery check-out line.

Notebooks can also be used for creative inspiration. Fill your journal with visual images that please you. Tape in a picture from a magazine. Paste in a cartoon that makes you smile. Doodle funny words and letters. Include quick little sketches of objects around you - shoes, flowers, leaves, cups, books, etc. Because I have many different areas of interest, it was becoming difficult for me to find the idea or brainstorm that I was looking for in my notes. Now, I keep an idea journal divided into sections - home business, freelance writing, personal and household, and homeschooling. I carry this beat-up, well-used sketchbook everywhere. When inspiration hits, I jot down notes or a quick sketch, and fill in details later, if necessary.

I can't tell you how valuable this notebook has been to me. Even though I don't have the time (or energy!) to do everything I want to do, I can at least note down my ideas for projects and activities for the future. This article developed from a note I jotted down last year.

Going back to school

Toby Adams

(Toby Adams is 16 years old. He had been homeschooled all his life until he attended school for six months in 1992. He has been homeschooling again since September 1992.)

Toby, why did you decide to go back to school?
I didn't, because of temporarily changed family circumstances my parents decided I should.

What year did you go into ? Is this lower than you were up to ?
Year 10, which was my appropriate class.

Did they have any trouble with you entering at that level?
No

What was it like?
I thought it was really funny at first because all the kids were naughty, ill-mannered, refused to listen in class and thought it was their job to give the teachers the hardest time possible.

How did you fit in with all these kids?
Well on the first day I went there I walked over to some kids and sat on a seat with them and they looked down their noses at me and asked what class I was in and when I said year 10 they pointed to another set of seats where the year 10's sat, you see you don't sit with Year 11's. Actually that amazed me how all the year 10's sat together and even in their own groups in year 10. For example basketballers, handballers, Nazis they all sit together in tight knit little groups.

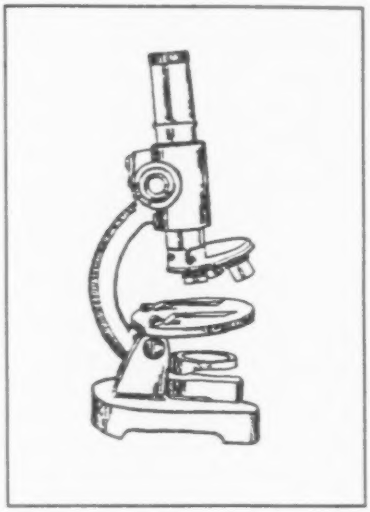
How did you find the regimentation?
No one thought it was a problem to be late for class regularly. As the year progressed the kids got slacker and slacker then after a time they would have a clampdown which would mean detentions for wearing the wrong coloured socks! I think uniforms are just a control thing in schools. For instance the kids go completely crazy and uncontrollable on no uniform days.

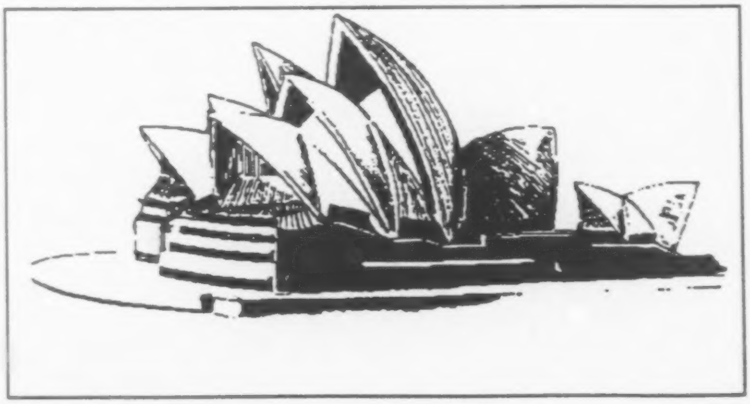
How much do you think you learned? Computers was the only class where I felt I learned something. Although the computers in the school were quite bad in some ways. When we used Apple 2a machines (which are very old) we had one each but when we used the IBMs there was only one machine to seven kids and most of the kids spent most of the time drawing stupid pictures.

What things did you really enjoy ?
Well I had fun at handball, but often the sport was really badly organised. Actually that wasn't bad because if you got sport detention you had to go and sit and read in an air-conditioned room, something I didn't really regard as a punishment.

What did you really hate?
I really hate the peer group pressure. For instance, when we were playing volleyball a kid purposefully kicked the volleyball right into a girls face, not only didn't he say sorry but everybody laughed at her.

Would you like to go back to school?
No thank you.





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Finding a Teacher for Out of Homeschool Activities

Jo-Anne Beirne

A 10 year old child explained to me recently that the reason why he didn't like his present music teacher was because "she is patronising". When asked what he meant this child (who does other classes in other areas) said "Well you know how in the lessons that I do with X and Y they treat me like I am their equal, when we are learning? Well, the music teacher presumes I am an idiot and that everything she says will need to be repeated over and ove I don't enjoy it when this happens".

This conversation and others like it have been repeated many times over in our own family homeschool. Finding teachers for music, art and craft, dancing, gymnastics etc. has been a constant challenge for us because while we are committed to our children expanding their horizons through extra-curricular activities we are not prepared to accept just anyone to teach our kids.

Finding a teacher that suits

We have found that the best teachers are not always the most highly qualified and that ideal teachers of a subject are not always working in that field. We always try to talk to our children's dancing, gym, soccer etc. teachers about how we learn with our children and their specific needs and desires. We impress upon them that we respect our children's learning and their instinct for what works. We speak about the reality that from our experience sequential, step by step learning is not the (only) way to achieve enjoyment and good results. We say we are not expecting a Baryshnikov or a Mozart, that we would prefer to have our children enjoy their music class rather than become virtuosos (though obviously we want to help them achieve the very best they can). We tell them that our children have chosen the class, or are prepared to give the lesson a fair go, so that the teacher can presume that the child will be well behaved and that we don't want them yelled at, or beaten up by fellow classmates. We try to determine the attitude of the teacher to achievement. If we encounter a teacher who feels that winning or being the greatest is the pinnacle of achievement, we are very unlikely to join a class with that teacher. We also promise ourselves that if we have given it a fair go, all is not lost if the child wishes to leave a class. Being miserable but attending does not fulfil our definition of productive learning.

Not all teachers, of whatever age and ability, relate well to children. For many it is just a job, a pay packet or a means of improving their own self-esteem. Our experience with extracurricular activities over the years has shown us a few things, though undoubtedly we will learn more as time goes on.

The best characteristics of the good teachers we have known would be at least some or all of the following: They respect the child as a person. They see the fact that they are imparting knowledge as a pleasurable opportunity rather than as a chore. They love their subject, usually practise it a great deal and are very enthusiastic about someone else sharing their devotion. They build up a relationship with the child that is mutually satisfying. It is an unequal relationship in terms of knowledge of course, but it is special in many other ways including mutual respect, child for teacher, teacher for child. They show great commitment to their subject and student, mostly remaining flexible to alternative ways of doing things. They are not locked into a method or plan that comes before all else. For instance, if the child has an interest in some area that goes off at a tangent the gifted teacher is likely to see this as an exciting oportunity rather than a nuisance distraction from the allotted curriculum.

Music

I had no music training myself and decided that I would really like my children to play a musical instrument. I plead guilty to having a three year old sawing away at a violin, attending numerous musical introduction courses and playing policewoman for practice sessions. I also confess in the past to valuing the achievement over the child's feelings and to making music seem like a chore. It took me a while to realise that in music, dancing, tennis etc. achievement and ability are not a reflection on either parent or child. There are always other activities and they will come up all through one's life. Everything does not have to be done now. In fact the world would be an awfully boring place if we all excelled at everything and did so from childhood.

But the worm can turn! I do also admit to letting a child take 18 months off piano, against everyone's advice, only to see him return to the instrument a much more confident and enthusiastic player who is in command of what he wants to do with music. I confess to never forcing music lessons (despite my strong inclinations to do so) on to a most adamant 11 year old, only to see her decide to start guitar last year and continue it with the addition of piano this year. She is showing a great deal of interest and delight in her endeavour.

The same has happened with many other extra curricular activities in our house. We've dragged and pranced through singing, tennis, gym, craft and dancing lessons with varying degrees of aptitude and enjoyment. Our most successful teacher of all started with us when she was a high school student. A native German who had not long before migrated to Australia. She brought to her German sessions, with our then very young children, no preconceptions about what teaching or learning would be like. Mostly she came to us a homesick individual desperate to share her culture and language, strongly believing that not to know German was to be somehow less than what one could be. The children never had any formal "school-type" lessons with her when they were young or even as they got older . She just had two hours, twice a week with each child where she played, sang, cooked, read, wrote, drew and shared activities with them.

Actually she really spoiled us for other teachers because she had a special gift of being "child-like". She really loved kids , their games, their sharing and she was endlessly patient and curious. She thrilled in their achievements and insinuated herself into their lives, just as they insinuated themselves into hers. She was never patronising, artificial or saccharin. As the children got older, though she could be demanding of their accuracy. Basically the result is that after 10 years we have children who are fluent German language speakers and readers. An important part of this learning was undoubtedly the strength and constancy of the relationship - this may be hard to find in the general community, but easier in the extended family. We have also found that teenagers and some younger children can make excellent teachers in their particular subject area.

Taking on and mastering a second langauge in a country where it is rarely spoken, with German illiterate parents, is quite a special achievement. While I believe all children are capable of it, I certainly know that it may take some searching to find this rare breed of teacher who is capable of encouraging and inspiring such an achievement. Obviously in the school system students have to take the teacher allotted to them whether they be great or ordinary. A benefit of homeschooling of course is that we can choose and be flexible with teachers and timing of lessons. The community is full of competent teachers in a wide range of activities - you can find one to suit your needs.

In the position of the learner

Perhaps one of the key issues we have teased out in our "teacher search" is determining what the learner is after. Does the child want the class for recreation or is it for knowledge extension? It is ridiculous to go to a professor of music for a child who thinks they might like to try lessons on the flute. Just as it is silly to expect a child who is gifted at dancing to attend the local class of beginners. The fact is that parents are the linking mechanism between a person with knowledge, skills and understanding and a person who wants to have all these things. Ultimately however the commitment to study, strive or enjoy is made by the student themselves.

Often I have to decide if my own criteria for judging the teacher would be my child's. Feedback on two levels is important. Firstly you must listen and talk to the child and secondly the teacher. Often a teacher is more than happy to accomodate a child's needs and aspirations if only they are told about them.

When I think of finding teachers, and then staying with them for activities, I try to apply the following checklist (not in any order of importance) to my deliberations.

1. What is the purpose of the lesson - relaxation or serious knowledge gathering ? Do both the teacher and the student understand what each expects out of the lesson ?
2.Does the teacher have the skills to impart ? (This is often not at all related to their qualifications).
3. Does the teacher really enjoy teaching? Do they have the spark of enthusiasm and commitment that will inspire my child?
4. Do they treat me with respect and listen to my queries, keeping me informed of how I can help and my child's progress ? Or do they say one thing to my face and another when I leave the room ?
5. Do they treat my child with respect ? Does the class the teacher is conducting fulfil my child's desire for that class whether it be relaxation or knowledge acquisition?

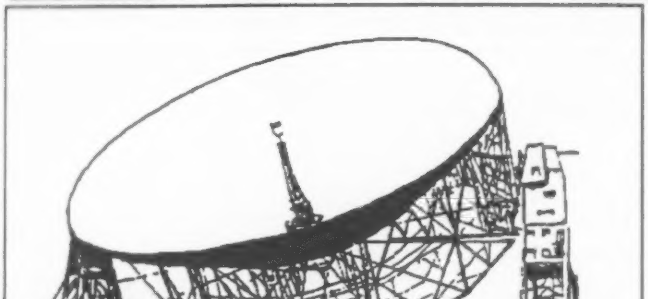
If all of these requirements are met I can be pretty sure that my children will really benefit from a special learning relationship.

I read a good summary of my feelings in an article from Scientific American December 1992 titled 'Learning From Asian Schools' by Harold W. Stevenson when he says

".......teachers can be described best as well-informed, well-prepared guides. They do not see themselves primarily as dispensers of information and arbiters of what is correct but rather as persons responsible for guiding students skillfully through the material............. children (should be) active participants in the learning process who must play an important role in producing, explaining and evaluating solutions to problems".

Using Maths Textbooks in the Homeschool

Jo-Anne Beirne



A homeschooling friend and I recently had a long conversation about standard Maths textbooks. I wondered if you would agree with any of the things we have found ?

1. Maths texts treat all children as if they have equal ability and interest in Mathematics.

2. Maths texts are appallingly repetitive and boring. Year after year the same material is revised, with barely any new information added, always presuming that the child never understood the facts in the first place.

3. Maths texts tend to break any learning task into such tiny fragments as to make the whole picture hard to recognise.

4. Most of the grade level texts are inappropriate in the homeschool where the one to one situation allows quick progression and deep understanding. Usually to provide challenge a parent should consider buying Maths texts that are, at least, two grade levels ahead of where their children would be in the system.

If you couldn't afford a textbook

Someone once asked me, what Maths she would teach if she couldn't afford a textbook. I recalled something that Richard Feynman the Nobel prize physicist (also an avid and gifted mathematician) said about Maths. Basically there are five components arithmetic, geometry, algebra, trigonometry and calculus.

The basic aim of primary school maths education is to introduce children to numbers and the operations performed with numbers (arithmetic) and also explain simple geometry. Secondary maths is about review of arithmetic, more geometry and introduction and explanations of algebra, trigonometry and calculus.

What is arithmetic?

The four basic operations: addition, subtraction, multiplication and division performed on numbers. The numbers on which the operations are performed become increasingly more complex of course (initially single digit going up to six digits) and then these operations must also be performed on fractions, decimals and percentages. Decimals and percentages are just different ways of writing fractions, and fractions are just the way we look at numbers that are less than one. Primary level maths is exploring and playing with numbers and what we can do with them. Add to this the ability to solve number problems in word form and an understanding of the modern calculator and voila! - primary Maths. Amazingly enough if you buy yourself a year 6 or 7 text you will find that they are still checking if the children know and understand what was taught in beginning primary.

Maths in the school

Textbooks are commonly used as the primary source and reinforcement for teaching maths in the classroom. Why ? Say a teacher is teaching addition of fractions. First she does not know what knowledge each of the children bring to that lesson on fractions. For instance "Do they understand fractions? Do they even understand addition ?"

Then as she teaches she must allow for the fact that some children can immediately take the information on board (so she can't let them be bored), some need a little extra work (keep them stimulated), some will not pick it up until she has reviewed it a couple of times (let's hope they keep paying attention, and don't start talking) and some will not even pick it up next year when the next teacher reviews the whole issue. She has neither the time nor often the energy to see a flicker of understanding in a child's eyes and reach for it. She cannot even be sure that all the children are attending to the lesson. (Johnny, at the back, stop passing notes, please and attend !).

So, logically, she uses the textbook after the blackboard lesson to review, extend, check understanding etc. This gives her some measure of her success imparting the knowledge and a good indication of what she has to do to improve understanding. It gives some students busywork to attend to while she works with others who need special attention. It saves her setting examples to be taken home and worked on at night, to reinforce (hopefully with the parent's help) what was taught in the day.

Maths in the homeschool

What do I want from my children learning maths ?

Comprehension, the ability to apply the learning, standards and the discipline to see things through. Obviously the same goals the schools strive for. But we have an entirely different set of circumstances. First we, as parents, are acutely aware of our child's strengths and weaknesses and the knowledge they bring to a topic. You will not start your student on addition of fractions for instance, just because the next chapter in the textbook says to do so, if you know the child is really not confident with the concept of fractions. Secondly, whenever we go through a topic area with our children we can very quickly tell if the light of "insight" is on or off. If it is off you always find yourself thinking "Are they ready for this now?" "How can I explain this better? "Maybe if we got the measuring cups, cut up an orange or some kindergarten squares?" Thirdly, we have the enormous advantage that the student is not compelled to stay silent for the sanity of the classroom. I have found that given the nature of the relationship when working with your child almost instantly your child will give you feedback on the topic you are covering " So you mean I can add a half and a third if I make them both sixths?" and on it goes.

I believe that textbooks should only be used as a resource in the homeschool because it is based on a learning relationship between the child and the parent, which is very different to the one in the classroom.

Homeschooling maths lessons are not limited by bells or timetables or external requirements. So that if the light of "insight" stays on you just keep firing - "now lets do quarters and thirds, twelfths and ninths etc." While you are doing it you'll undoubtedly find a few tables that are sticky - "how about we just write down the eight times tables to look at and make things easier" and you'll find that they'll notice things "Oh to cut things in exact eighths you really have to measure them well." Three hours later you'll call a halt for lunch and probably get a volunteer to cut the sandwiches in halves, quarters and eighths.

This student will not have the need to do 100 textbook examples to prove that they know the concept of addition of fractions. They may only need to do ten, if you feel there is need at all and then they will probably be done very swiftly as they sing out the answers to you. You will undoubtedly review the topic at some time in the next couple of days, as it stays uppermost in your mind. For example at the dinner table "You got half the pie and Paul got a third - how much left?" Over the next few weeks, for example when cooking (I need double the mixture please), additon of fractions will come up -again because of the type of relationship involved in homeschooling - close, mutual, regular contact. But basically you can be confident that addition of fractions was really understood at that first level because you were there and you saw it happen. To me this method is much more efficient and satisfying than screeds of examples in an exercise book and the ticks and crosses, which work effectively (up to a point) in a classroom.

Of course there are those that say that doing heaps of examples gets the concept straight in your head and is good discipline but there are others that say that lots of examples, (especially when you are confident you know what you are doing) make maths boring - and most of these are the students who have to do all the examples! Actually I believe the "doing lots of examples" idea is a misinterpretation of the concept of discipline. Michaelangelo had to be incredibly disciplined to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. He would have been labelled totally crazy to keep on doing it over and over again. What are we saying to our children about learning and maths if we make them endlessly repeat things that they already know?

We have a big advantage in the homeschooling situation not only because of one to one, but because we know what went before and we can use "hands-on" to deepen understanding. The comparison time wise is interesting. Often a couple of hours in the homeschool compared to a couple of weeks in the classroom. Which may mean you are severely limiting yourself if you only consult one graded textbook in a year and don't progress up the grades as appropriate. To my mind it is a shame to import a textbook, which has been compiled and designed for classroom needs, into the homeschool and use it in the same fashion as it is used in the classroom, dissipating our naturally superior learning methods.

Certainly for those who want to make sure they are "covering everything the schools are" textbooks tend to provide reassurance. As well, textbooks may explain in a simple way how to solve a problem or attack an issue (there are major exceptions to this). For many parents they are a useful "memory jogger", as the question arises "how will they manage if they have to go back to school?". But, in many cases, the way you always did it is just as good and probably superior because you, the teacher, are confident with "your way" .

High school texts no better

Pursuing my natural cynicism of maths textbooks after 8 years of homeschooling I have had a fun time of late comparing high school textbooks and what they expect "learning wise". I was interested to read a Year 9 text that in chapters 1 and 2 (42 pages) reviews yet again - arithmetic! Not harder versions mind you just the same old questions done in years 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8 ("Do I have to do these again mum?"). The algebra chapter headings in the year 9 book are exactly the same as they were in the Year 8 book as are many of the examples. No wonder students get bored with Maths.

Conclusion

It may take some courage but perhaps we can learn to pick and choose and discriminate what works for us in our family rather than just presuming that textbooks or standardised curriculum will provide the best results.

In no state in Australia is there a government prescription for what must be learnt or how it must be learnt, other than in very general terms. Be confident to pursue the method and use the tools which work best for you and your child.

Reading & Literacy

Is your child an early reader ? Is your child a late reader? How can I teach my child to read? There are no simple answers to these questions, it depends on the child, the circumstances and the teacher. Homeschoolers who are looking for answers might find that the following articles point them in some interesting directions.

The Acquisition of Literacy Skills

Alanya Sutcliffe

(Alanya is a teacher with Distance Education in NSW who has sent some notes on Reading and Support Strategies. She put them together for an on-air Staff Development she addressed at Tibooburra, she asks us to note that they may not stand alone.)

How do we read?

Simply the interaction of a book (text) and a brain. Meaning is made from this. Reading is the interaction of the text (visual information) with information in the brain of the reader (non-visual information). Effectiveness of the reader in making meaning out of the interaction will depend upon the reader's store of non-visual information: **semantic knowledge**; or information about the world: **syntactic knowledge**; knowledge about sentence patterns, parts of speech: **grapho-phonic** information; or spelling and letter sequences. It is all about **making sense.**

Good readers expect the text to make sense. They do not read word by word but skim and search for sense, predicting and testing and keeping it all together.

Poor readers are not skilled in looking for sense, in fact, they may not realise that this is what reading is all about. They guess wildly, try to sound out slowly and make no use of the clues in the surrounding print.

Knowledge required for reading comes from experiences of talking and learning about the world and about the written language. Recent research has shown that phonological awareness is related to success in early reading (the ability to recognise that a spoken word consists of a sequence of sounds) This skill can be taught. Children can become aware of the segmentation of speech through word games, rhymes and songs. This awareness provides the basis of automatic word identification skills which allow the reader to concentrate on comprehension.

Support Strategies

Reading begins at home; Reading is one aspect of language, closely linked with talking, listening and writing. Experiences at home prepare a child to move naturally into reading.; A home rich in language is where people love stories, books and telling tales, use interesting speech, and are seen to read and write.

The best preparation for a child is to hold him/her on the adult's lap and read favourite stories over and over again.; Physical comfort and security identify books as something pleasurable.

SO

Talk, explain, question, read; Encourage the child to talk and experiment with words; Tell and retell stories; Encourage children to read along, discuss pictures, run finger under print; Leave out words of familiar stories, recite rhymes and encourage child to put in missing words; Label pictures and drawings; Share recipes, research instructions, letters; Ask why, how, what do you think questions about what you have read; Write letters, lists, fill in forms together.

For older reluctant readers

Select books which pursue the child's current interest, buy comics, word games, puzzles, magazines. Borrow or make taped stories for the child to listen to and follow the print. Encourage the child to keep a diary of events (write for him/her if necessary) paste in cuttings, pictures, tickets, etc and ask the child to help you read it all. read/serialise suitable books, but expect some contribution from the child: either a picture, opinion, cartoon, craft activity etc. Encourage the

child to review books; buy recording title details, date read and comment. Reading to a younger child or writing and illustrating material for the sibling benefits both parties. Letters to and from friends, family and penfriends are good motivators especially if invitation are involved.

Sight words
Displays, child-made books, craft, mobiles and labels can surround the child; Base sheet activities involving matching, selecting. Sorting of cards into eg colour words, animal words, 'other'. Concentration, matching, identical words or 'go togethers', making sentences with words or phrases, substituting; Illustrating words can be enjoyable as well as drawing attention to pattern eg making the oo in look into eyes. Words can be drawn in sand, paint, steam, chalk, dust, with gingers on the body, plasticine etc. Read and draw activities, selecting pictures, from magazines, level of sophistication can be varied to age.

Phonemic awareness (realising that words can be broken up into separate units of sound and put back together again) This training is oral.

Segmentation Drawing a word out slowly (2 secs each sound)

Blending The opposite of segmentation, putting sounds back together to form a word.

Isolation: Saying the phoneme in a specified position

Alliteration Recognising if words start with the same sound

Exchange Substituting one phoneme for another to make a new word

Rhyming Sequential activities can be found in many programs

All activities relating to words and sounds in isolation need to be completed in a contextual framework. The object of the exercise should not be lost within seemingly pointless tasks, the object being to encourage reading, and to develop reading through reading. Thus wherever appropriate, the focus word or sound should relate directly to a sentence or story written by or of interest to the child. Phrases should be presented in preference to single words and the article (i.e., "a", "the" etc) at the very least, should be included (e.g., "the cat" rather than "cat" alone).

Reading Aloud Is Not Enough

Patrick Groff

This article is from the Spring edition 1993 of Mothering magazine. A superb US publication that concerns itself with The Art of Mothering; Health; A Child's World; Pregnancy, Birth & Midwifery; Ways of Learning & Family Living. Mothering P.O. Box 1690 Santa Fe NM 87504 Ph 0015 1 505-984-8116

As a specialist in reading development, I am frequently consulted by parents. "I would read aloud regularly to my child long before school began. Why then," they inquire, "does my child now have trouble learning to read in school?" Or parents will ask, "Why did my child not learn to read before school began?"

True Gains and False Claims

Reading aloud to young children is certainly of great consequence. For one thing, these sessions create a warm emotional bond between parent and child. They offer a unique opportunity for close, uninterrupted contact on a recurring basis. For another, reading aloud to little ones helps them develop enthusiasm towards books. They discover these volumes contain pleasing content; they learn to equate reading with enjoyment. A positive attitude toward books plays a well-documented role in learning to read.

Then, too, the more children listen to stories, the more their literary capacities expand. While listening, children discover that written tales have a "grammar" - a beginning, middle, and end, as well as other linguistic structures. This knowledge goes a long way toward helping children write stories of their own at some point. Most books also extend the child's knowledge of word meanings, and transport the child beyond the realm of immediate experience.

In short, as children listen to stories, their background of information grows. They move well on their way to becoming culturally literate. Indeed, studies show that children who bring prior understanding to the subjects they read about in school are far more likely to read classroom material with comprehension.

While the advantages of reading aloud to young children are notable, parents have been oversold on the effect these readings will have. Some parents have been told that read-aloud sessions are more critical to the acquisition of reading skills than is systematic and direct teaching. Others have been informed that reading aloud is the most important contributor to success in learning to read.

Advocates of this "immersion in books" or "whole language" theory of reading development maintain that the best way to teach school children to read is simply to continue the read-aloud approach used at home. Thus, some teachers merely read aloud while their students follow along in duplicate texts. Experimental research on reading instruction, however, does not support these views. Instead, as Marilyn Adams concludes in her recent review of this research, "explicit training" in reading development is imperative. (1) Harvard professor Jeanne Chall in her now famous survey of experimental studies, comes to the same conclusion. (2)

Proponents of the "following along" approach, say these researchers, base their belief on a false premise - namely, that learning to read and learning to speak are identical processes. Actually, they are far from identical. The history of humankind reveals that the spoken word preceded the written word by many thousands of years. Indeed today, all people learn to speak, whereas numerous societies still do not have a written language. In addition, learning to speak is an effortless process requiring no formal instruction. As humans, we have no doubt inherited a neurological capacity for the relaxed, carefree, and facile learning of oral language. The same cannot be said of written language. In fact, about 20 percent of Untied States citizens experience serious difficulty in learning to read. (3) What is needed, according to experimental research, is direct and systematic instruction in reading, including intensive education in word recognition skills.

Inherent Limitations

Listening to stories has a limited effect on reading development. One celebrated study, by professor Dolores Durkin, reveals that only 1 percent of "intelligent preschool children" learn to recognise 18 written words after simply being read to by their parents. (4) A subsequent investigation reports that considerable numbers of children who are not read to at home become excellent readers in school. (5)

A third study shows that children's interest reading, as a result of being read to, is not directly related to how soon they learn to read. (6) Another researcher even found that third graders who were read to frequently as toddlers became poorer readers than those who were not read to frequently. (7)

Statistics comparing how often children are read to at home with how successfully they learn to read in school are equally illuminating. These findings offer little if any comfort to those who maintain that reading aloud to young children is the main solution to today's national crisis in reading development. All told, the body of experimental research to date does not support the conclusion that reading aloud to children before they begin school will ensure their reading success in school.

Beyond Reading Aloud

If you desire to fully prepare your child to learn to read upon entering school, or to have your young child become a precocious reader, you will need to go beyond the reading aloud of stories. Here are four activities that have been identified by reading specialists as a further means of assisting a child's progress in reading. Try them in the order in which they appear:

* Show your child that sentences, both spoken and written, are made up of a string of individual words. Have your child listen to sentences, look at them, and count the number of words in them.
* Show your child that spoken words are composed of individual sounds. *Dog*, for example, has three sounds: /d/-/o/-/g/. Say a word, and have your child count the number of sounds in it; repeat the activity with another word. Start with short words, and move on to longer ones.
* Point out that speech sounds in words occur in serial order. Select a word and - using the phonetic spellings in your dictionary as a guide - enunciate, in order, the separate speech sounds in that word. (The serial order of speech sounds in *man*, for example, is /m/-/a/-/n/.) Have your child guess the correct pronunciation of the target word. Start with two- and three-letter words and progress to longer ones, avoiding those with "silent" letters.
* Explain that removing or adding a speech sound to a spoken word creates an entirely new word. Ask, for example: "If I take away the first sound of *cat* - /k/ - what is left?" or "How many sounds can I add to /ing/?"

Segmenting speech sounds out of spoken words, counting the sounds in words, and moving the sounds around within words are high-order prerequisites to learning our alphabetic code (the letters we use to represent the speech sounds of our oral language). Children who can consciously recognise, enumerate, and repeat these speech sounds - which youngsters already do unconsciously, as evidenced in their ability to speak - are well on their way to learning how to decode words. In effect, they are ready to learn about phonics (the relationship between speech sounds and letters).

Why phonics? "The message is clear," say researchers Dale Johnson and James Baumann. "If you want to improve word-identification ability, teach phonics."(8) And, as reading researchers demonstrate, no literacy factor is more closely related to reading comprehension than automatic - that is, quick and accurate - word recognition. (9)

"How about teaching the alphabet?" parents often inquire. Children will need this information while learning about phonics in school. Thus, those who learn their letters at home will be off to a head start. Teach the alphabet? By all means.

The final word is: *yes*, young children may learn something about the alphabet and the speech sounds incidentally while their parents read to them. Exactly how much of this critical knowledge can be acquired through listening alone, however, remains uncertain . Reading aloud cannot reliably impart all of this specialised and esoteric information. Reading aloud is simply not enough.

Notes

1.Marilyn Adams, *Beginning to Read* (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1990).

2.Jeanne Chall, Learning to Read: The Great Debate (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983).

3.Patricia Smith et al,. *Illiteracy in America* (Washington, DC: National Advisory Council on Adult Education, 1986).

4.Dolores Durkin, *Children Who Read Early* (New York: Teachers College, Colombia University 1966).

5.William Teale, "Toward a Theory of How Children Learn to Read," in Hilil Goelman, ed., *Awakening to Literacy* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1984).

6.Chari Briggs and David Elkind, "Characteristics of Early Readers," *Perceptual and Motor Skills 44* (June 1977): 1231-1237.

7.George Walker and Iris Kuerbitz, "Reading to Preschoolers As an Aid to Successful Beginning Reading," *Reading Improvement 16* (Summer 1979): 1149-154.

8.Dale Johnson and James Baumann, "Word Identification," in P David Pearson, ed., *Handbook of Reading Research* (New York: Longman, 1984), p.595.

9.Patrick Groff, "An Analysis of the Debate: Teaching Reading without Conveying Phonics Information," *Interchange 21* (Winter 1990): 1-14.

Reading without Nonsense

Frank Smith

.........In "Reading without Nonsense" I described the ease with which children become literate when they are personally involved with people actually making use of signs, labels, lists, newspapers, magazines and books in the world around them. By contrast I examined the difficulty many children experience with formal reading instruction based on exercise, material and drills which are largely nonsensical. The philosophy of this kind of instruction , which I now call "programmatic" is that reading is a set of skills that can be taught and mastered in a pre-determined sequence, provided there is a closely managed "systems" approach with properly specified objectives and frequent tests. Programmatic instruction is the antithesis of meaningful language experience for teachers and children. It is primarily a method of control. Since I first wrote this in 1978 the issues have become more clearly demarcated and the conflict more acute. On the one hand the programmatic approach to reading instruction had clearly failed. No one claims that children are reading better today than they were 25 years ago, when the development of rigorously controlled instructional programs for literacy instruction began to proliferate. That was the time when many educators thought that the technology that could put man on the moon would also be a certain cure for illiteracy. One might think that most politicians and administrators by now would have recognised that the "remedy" for illiteracy might instead be a contributing factor. But with the failure has come a clamour for more programs, for even tighter control of schools and teachers in the name of "accountability". All this may sound reasonable but it constrains teachers to teach in a manner decreed by outside authorities who know absolutely nothing of the particular children in their classroom, or their unique and individual interests, concerns and difficulties..............."

An excerpt from Essays into Literacy

In his book "Essays Into Literacy" Frank Smith has a great deal to say about what he regards as the twelve wrong ways to teach reading. Following are just two of his explanations of common misconceptions.

1.Aim for Early Mastery of the Rules of Reading

The rule is absurd because there are no rules of reading, at least none that can be specified with sufficient precision to teach a child. All proficient readers have acquired an implicit knowledge of how to read, but this knowledge has been developed through the practice of reading, not through anything that is taught in school. The learning process is identical with that by which infants develop a set of internal rules for producing and comprehending spoken language without the benefit of any formal instruction. And just as no linguist is able to formulate a complete and adequate set of grammatical rules that could be used to program a computer (or a child) to use spoken language, so no theorist has yet achieved anything like an adequate insight into the knowledge that people acquire and use when they become fluent readers.

But even if we did have a clearer understanding of the reading process, it would be doubtful whether anyone should try to give this understanding directly to children. After all, millions of children have learned to read in the past without any profound insight on the part of their instructors into what the children were learning to do. There is absolutely no evidence that teaching grammar helps a child to learn to speak, and none that drills phonics or other nonreading activities help the development of reading. It is not difficult to argue that mastery of phonics develops only to the extent that reading proficiency is acquired, just as grammar is a meaningful and useful subject (if at all) only to those who already know how to use language.

Typically, what are called "rules of reading" are hints or slogans for reading instruction. Learning to read is not a matter of mastering rules. Children learn to read by reading.

2.Ensure that Phonic Skills are Learned and Used

A prominent aspect of the "reading by rules" fallacy is the notion that reading ability depends on a knowledge of spelling-to-sound correspondences. (In its sophisticated form, this notion merely asserts that children must learn the "sounds of letters" without any realisation of just how complex and predictable spelling-to-sound correspondences are.) But reading is not accomplished by decoding to sound; meaning must usually be grasped before the appropriate sounds can be produced, and the production of sounds alone does not give meaning. Decoding directly from letters to sound in order to understand what they are reading. Nevertheless, it is frequently argued that a mastery of phonics must surely be essential for children; otherwise, how would they ever learn to recognise words that they had not met in print before, words that are not in their "sight vocabulary?" There are two good reasons why the last resort of a child in such circumstances should be to turn to phonics.

The first objection to phonics as a way of reading is that it is conspicuously unreliable and cumbersome. Studies at the Southwest Regional Laboratory for Educational Development (US) showed that 166 rules would be required to account for the most frequent correspondences in just 6,000 one- and two-syllable words in the vocabulary of 6- to 9- year-olds - and these 166 rules would still not account for over 10 percent of the most common words which would have to be excluded as "exceptions". There is no rule for predicting which of many alternative rules should apply on any particular occasion, any more than there are rules for determining which words are exceptions. The rules often cannot be applied unless one is aware of the meaning and syntactic role of the word and the way it carries stress. In other words, phonics is easy provided one knows what a word is in the first place.

The very complexity and indeterminacy of such a system makes it remarkable that anyone should expect children ever to try to learn it. Nevertheless, many educators believe that teaching at least an arbitrary part of the system is the answer to "the reading problem". But even if children were gifted and gullible enough to learn such a system, there is absolutely no evidence that they could ever actually use it in the process of reading. Quite the reverse, it is easy to show that any attempt to read by translating letters to sounds through the application and integration of phonic rules could result only in catastrophic overloading of short-term memory. Besides, the use of spelling-to-sound rules to identify words is as absurd as clipping a lawn with nail scissors. Far more efficient and economical alternatives are available.

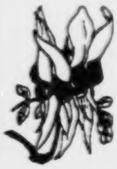
This leads to the second objection to the phonics fallacy, namely that sounding out words letter by letter (or the even more complicated task of identifying and articulating "letter clusters") is the last resort of the fluent reader, a fact already known by most children whose natural perception of reading has not been distorted in the process of reading instruction................. (pages 12 & 13 in Essays into Literacy by Frank Smith Heinemann Educational Books London)

OTHER READING

Joining The Literacy Club Frank Smith Heinemann Portsmouth NH

Reading Without Nonsense Frank Smith Teachers College Press Columbia University New York

Insult to Intelligence Frank Smith Heinemann Portsmouth NH



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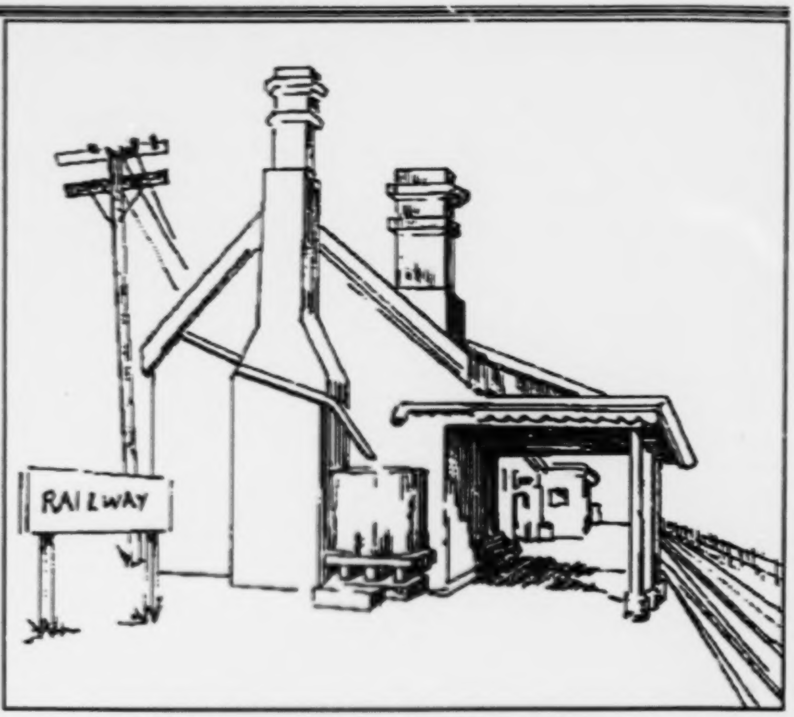
More on the issue of custody of homeschooling children

Lynden Jacobi

(Lynden Jacobi and Len McCarthy among many other things, make wooden toys and live with their two young daughters and son Josh in Newcastle NSW.)



Lynden wrote *"After reading the article on* ***Custody Issues and Homeschooling*** *I thought I should write in and tell people how our situation has worked out".*

I have been separated from Joshua's father for nine years and our ability to communicate in a reasonable manner has fluctuated, seesawing from angry accusations to friendly exchanges of ideas. I began homeschooling Josh almost two years ago and was very worried about Mike's possible reaction to this decision. He runs a school/tourist camp on his farm, and luckily had just had a group of homeschoolers stay for a week long camp and was convinced that homeschooling was a good idea.

This was his feeling for a few months but he slowly began to have his doubts again and he wanted proof that Josh was learning and keeping up with his peers at public school. Josh was behind those kids to begin with because he had spent the first two years of school at a Steiner School and six months travelling in the US, Ireland and Thailand before he began 3rd grade at the local public school.

Although I was seeing Josh learning every day, Mike was only seeing him fitting in with the large groups of school kids (aged from 8 to 12) at the camps. Josh always takes a little while to settle in with a new group of kids he hasn't met before and this was the situation at the farm.

We both had very different views of Joshua. I was seeing a well-balanced and socially adept child who was doing fairly well academically and Mike was seeing an insecure kid and felt that his chances of growing up into a normal adult were becoming slimmer and slimmer. I was sure that homeschooling was working very well for us and therefore when Josh was with me he was not shy about telling people about it, but when he was with Mike who felt that school was the only reasonable option, he was much more reluctant to discuss his education with anyone. Mike saw this as a sign that he was unhappy with his achievements. This disagreement finally flared up into a situation in which Josh was caught in the middle of an argument over whether he was okay or not.

Josh was very distressed by this. I was very upset too so I insisted that before Josh was allowed to visit the farm again Mike and I would have to see a counsellor to discuss Josh's education with a mediator present. This turned out very well. We were expecting an hour long session but it actually dragged on for three hours, but one of the things we finally managed to agree upon was a suggestion that we both spend a couple of days in each other's environment in order to observe Josh in these different situations. One of the conditions of this agreement was that when we were at each other's places we were not allowed to mention anything that would provoke any feelings of conflict at all. If it was necessary to say anything we were to write it down and discuss it at a later date.

Although I thought this agreement was a great idea I was also very anxious about how it would turn out.

Mike was at this stage totally anti-home schooling and I felt that he could just come in and make lots of notes about the shortcomings of our set up without really seeing what we are actually doing. My partner Len and I and our two daughters had often stopped at the farm for an overnight visit with Josh but Mike had never visited Josh up here and had resisted any contact with Josh's life with us. Waiting for Mike's visit I felt like I was getting ready for a visit from a Home School Liaison Officer, who was going to stay for two days and nights and who would prefer it if my child was sent to a boarding school.

We spent our two days at the farm in January and all went very well. We were involved in the camp activities and it was great to have that time with Josh at his farm.

Mike came up here in early February and he took Josh to baseball practice the first afternoon. That evening we had an enjoyable dinner with family and friends. The next morning Mike arrived back from his morning run when Josh was halfway through his maths. He immediately started suggesting things and giving Josh little problems to solve. Josh was obviously getting flustered when I finally interrupted and reminded Mike that our agreement was to just observe Josh in each other's environment. Mike accepted this and stopped trying to take over the lesson. When Josh was finished with his Maths he wandered off into his room. Mike was surprised at this and began trying to organise an English lesson or Geography lesson to continue on with. He called Josh back in and began trying to interest him in things like latitude and longitude. This didn't elicit much of a response. I got out a couple of pen pal letters from Asia and Russia and some maps and the atlas and just talked with Josh about where we had travelled in relation to these pen pals.

We went to the beach after this and when we got back for lunch Josh got out The Bones Book and skeleton set and put it together. We talked about the bones and exoskeletons and muscles and the nervous system and numerous other things. After this Josh read a bit with Mike from a karate fiction book which we had been reading together. Later Josh and Mike went fishing with a neighbour. When they got home at 9:30pm we had a light meal and Josh did a little bit of work on spelling "to, two, too, for and four" which I hadn't noticed he wasn't clear about during the morning maths.

By the end of the evening Mike had decided that our "school" was very good. I think he was impressed about Josh's obvious enjoyment of learning. Also that Josh was quite willing to do "lessons" at any time of the day. He realised that it isn't necessary in our household to do three or four hours of school work every morning. The idea I had always promoted of "learning all the time" began to make sense at last.

A few days after his visit I got a call from Mike telling that he felt our home schooling was excellent. I was so surprised at his change of attitude and very pleased that it worked out so well. This was the best that we could have expected. As it has turned out we are all much happier and Josh is able to grow and learn naturally without the pressure of feeling he is letting down one of his parents. It was wonderful for Mike to see Josh up here and great for Josh to be able to include his Dad in his life with us.

I think one of the most important things we came to realise is that both of our views of Josh are valid even if they do differ. We should always try to be aware of this and if possible try to see the other parent's point of view no matter how much one disagrees with it. I'm sure we will still have our ups and downs and disagreements about Josh's upbringing and education, but at the moment, things are great!

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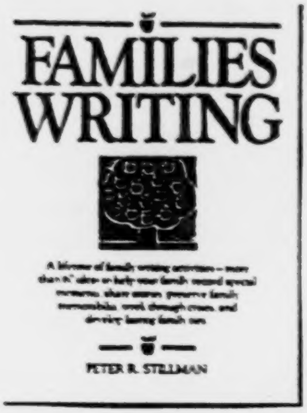

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PAMELA LLOYD

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Our homeschool

Sue Cartwright

(Sue & Joe Cartwright are involved in the computer world as well as being the parents of Ashton 9 and Christopher 7 they come from the Blue Mountains region of NSW.)

We have been homeschooling for 3 years now and I can honestly say that with every day, we are becoming happier and happier. When we first started, I was very serious about the whole thing. The children had to "sit down" to learn and I had to "teach" them. Those days are gone, although I am glad to say they didn't last very long.

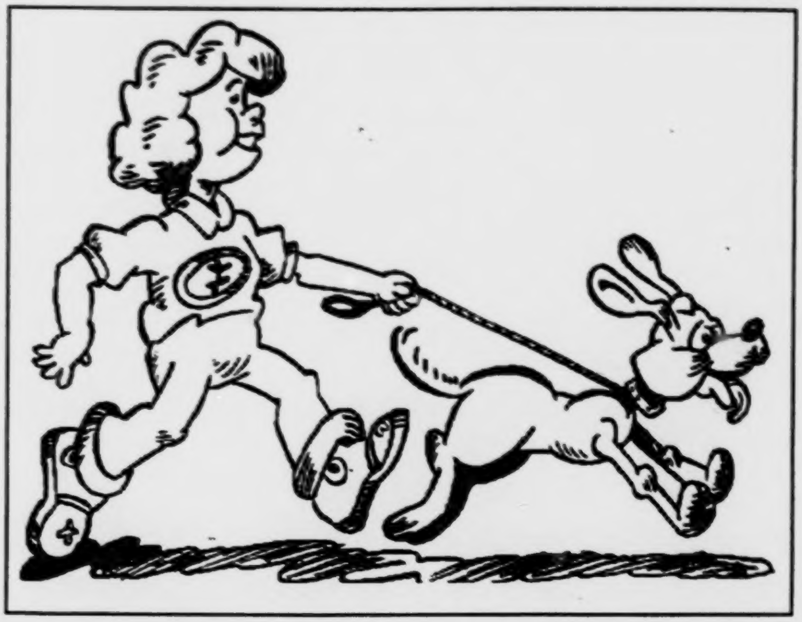
Can children only learn sitting down? Can they only learn when someone teaches them? No and No. I have seen for myself that children are learning ALL THE TIME. Once I gave my children the freedom to pursue whatever subjects they were interested in, I was kept busy - full time- just keeping up with their pursuits. My first big realisation was that they are indeed separate people with their own personalities, likes, dislikes etc and I couldn't and shouldn't foist my personality, interests and disinterests on them.

An example: My oldest has a head for figures. He always has remembered amazing details. He can tell you the temperature of the sun, how far away the moon is, at what speed an object falls. I recall one day where he said, "Mum, do you know how fast a bullet travels?" I replied "No". I was about to launch into " We can look that up... etc" but my son then said, "Well, it travels at blah speed, and it blah...." He then went into a tremendous physics spiel. What amazed me is that he was actually teaching ME. What is more, he knew he was, and he knew that his understanding on the subject was superior to mine. He was 8 years old at the time.

In following each of their own pursuits, I have been on a tremendous journey. Christopher, our youngest, decided he would be a mechanic. A friend of ours is a mechanic. Chris went down to work with him every Saturday for a year! I had to put up with all the spark plug, tools and general garbage that he came home with. He quit that (hurray!) and took up gymnastics, eventually winning 6 medals at State in 1992, taking overall second (missing 1st place by 0.3 points) He came away with a gold and 5 silver medals. He followed a course of interest in birds, collecting feathers, modelling life-like birds out of clay and putting feathers on them to make realistic models. He took up ballet and dance. He loves singing. he took piano lessons. he still loves piano, but has put that aside for the moment to try out acting. He loves all sports and is very co-ordinated. He and his brother nagged me for 8 months to do fencing, (they had Zorro) I thought they would forget about it. No such luck. I had to find a fencing club and they went for a year. They quit as one cannot compete until 12 years old, but they intend to continue at that point.

Our eldest boy decided to be a magician. He attends the Genis Club now, a band of professional magicians. He has read every book in two libraries on the subject, has given numerous professional shows, and is making money out of it! He loves geology and over the years has collected probably $1,000 worth or gems. He has cut stones at his local lapidary club, and can make broaches, rings, etc. He had made $100's of dollars selling "gem trees" (little wire trees with precious stones on them). The money comes in handy to buy more rocks and to buy magician gear. He has taken up acting recently, and currently wants to be an actor. He loves computers and is learning to programme them as he has a particular strategy game he wants to devise.

I really could go on and on but I won't. What I want to communicate here is that almost NONE OF THESE INTERESTS belong to my husband and myself. Sure, we are into computers and so is our oldest boy. But I think that is it. I can tell you that each of these interests the boys thought



up and pursued in their own way. Sure I helped as I said, "OK, I will take you to gym, etc." But that is where it ends. I never did gym as a child. Neither did my husband. Chris saw it on the Olympics on TV and thought he would like to try it. When Ashton said he wanted to be a magician, I thought MAGICIAN! No boy of mine is going to be a magician! But I did not say this out loud. I have learned better - thanks to homeschooling. What I said was "OK, honey. Try it out." Ashton now has some great friends (professional magicians of course!). They think that a boy of his age is great fun to have around because of his genuine interest. One friend from the magic club, by the way is a science teacher, who has visited often. Ashton expressed an interest in chemistry, so Paul (the science teacher) comes over and does chemistry with him! Paul (about 40) is now an avid supporter of homeschooling.

I do not believe that going to school makes a child social. we all know this, but I want to give an example. If one is stuck every day at school with the school bully, one would eventually give in. I know I did when at school. Here is a story: One night, our son Ashton (when 9 years old) spent the night at my brother's house with his cousin Ben (then about 12). Ben and Ashton were walking toward the shops and some of Ben's school friends (also 12) stopped Ben. The "friends" of Ben then told him how they had been stealing hub caps, and how great this was, and how there was a man down the street who would give them $2 a hub cap. They had a lot of money and had bought all these lollies. One of the boys offered some of the "booty" (lollies) to Ben. Ashton, our 9 year old then stepped in and said, "Ben, if you take those lollies you will be as bad as they are. You shouldn't steal." Ben didn't take the lollies and the boys walked home.

When Ashton came home I asked him about his time with my brother and his cousin, and he told me all about what he did, but he never mentioned the incident. My brother called me up later and told me about it. Apparently his son, Ben, was so impressed that he had told his father about it, and then his father called to tell me. I asked him why he didn't tell me about it and he said, "Gosh, Mum, it wasn't that big a deal."

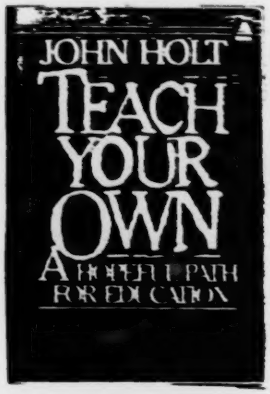
Well, I would no more have stood up to some older kids at his age than fly! I was really proud of him! But to him it was "No big deal". What also surprised me is that even though we have never (at least to my knowledge), given either of the children any formal lessons in morality, they not only know and understand the moral standards that my husband and I hold for our family, but they can apply them.

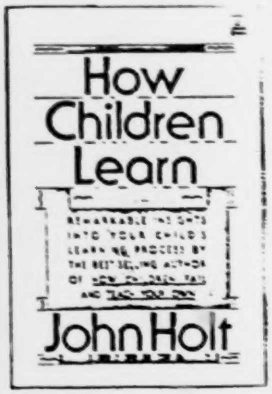
So, that is our story. It is ongoing. The only problem they will ever have is deciding what profession/job/home business to take up as they are so interested in everything. Not like these kids who leave high school, and still have NO IDEA what they want to achieve in life. I have talked to a lot of them. I ask, "What are you going to do when you leave school?" Some of them vaguely say, "Oh I guess I will go to University." (But they have no idea what they want to study.) Some will say, "I hope I can get a job." (But they have no idea what kind of job to get because they never had the opportunity to discover where their interests lay or what they were good at.)

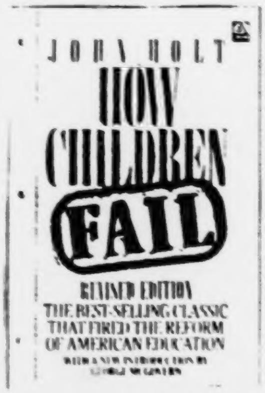
A friend of mine has a son who just achieved 98.6 on his TER. I know this boy and he HAS NO IDEA what he wants to do. When I kept at him saying "Surely there is something you want to do..." He said " MAYBE he will be a lawyer, because the money is good." What kind of reason is that? Spend a lifetime of work at something because it "seems like" it might be a good idea. Or because it "makes money". The poor kid has no devotion, no overwhelming interest in anything! He is shy, lacks confidence, and - his mother says that he "lost all his creativity" through trying to get a good TER score. And look where it got him. Exactly nowhere.

Our children are using this exciting time of their youth, to confidently go toward where their goals are and find themselves, their abilities and interests. They get up each day with enthusiasm to pursue their interests and the day isn't long enough for them to do all they want to do. They will not be getting a TER score. But if someone could "test" them on their ability to survive in life, to be happy and achieve their own goals; if someone could test their personal certainty and confidence, then I know that is one "test" they would do very well on indeed.

The books of John Holt



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Forget about Planning Quality Time

Ed Wojcicki

This article is reprinted from a 1992 edition of Mothering magazine. A superb US publication that concerns itself with The Art of Mothering; Health; A Child's World; Pregnancy, Birth & Midwifery; Ways of Learning & Family Living. Mothering P.O. Box 1690 Santa Fe NM 87504 Ph 0015 1 505-984-8116

Experience proves that building relationships, especially in families, requires wasting time together just hanging around or sitting on the porch or building snow sculptures in the yard. Relationships need quantity time as much as they need quality time. My 11 year old daughter Sara startled me one evening and taught me a valuable lesson about quality time. Begging for my attention, she asked if I would help her set up a tent in the backyard. Not now, honey. OK, she said. Would I drain our wading pool and refill it with clean water? Later. She then talked as if her entire future depended upon going out for a snack right then! "Can we go get ice cream?" she asked. Maybe."Do you think we can go?" came the question 10 minutes later. "Can we?" she repeated a few minutes later, knowing full well I knew the rest of the sentence. "Have you decided yet?""Yes, I have decided. We're not going." And we didn't go.

Yet, something gnawed away at me. I knew I had let her down, and I wondered if I had made a mistake by turning down an opportunity to be with her, even though I preferred to do my own projects that evening.

A New View

Earlier in the day, I later learned, Sara had discovered on my computer screen the first couple of sentences I had drafted for this article: "Kids hate quality time any time. Parents ought to forget about it."My theme was going to be that parental plans for "quality time" often fail to produce resounding joy in children. That's as far as I got. When I returned to my writing hours later, I found a new sentence on the screen: "(Sara says) I like quality time."Sara's addendum jolted me into a new understanding of quality time.

Previously, I had known only two definitions of the term:

Definition #1: "Quality time," in popular use, involves scheduling a special event with others, usually family members to deepen relationships. Parents might look ahead to the weekend, for example, and designate three hours of Saturday afternoon as pure quality time- to take the children to the park and then to a restaurant for a treat. Or spouses might designate one evening a month as quality time so that they will never forget how to enjoy each other's company.

Definition #2 (my longtime preference): "Quality time" is a trendy rationalization for not spending enough time with people who need us or people we love. Experience proves that building relationships, especially in families, requires wasting time together just hanging around or sitting on the porch or building snow sculptures in the yard. Relationships need quantity time as much as they need quality time.

Definition #3 (my daughter's contribution): While adults debate the pros and cons of planned "quality time," children have a definition of their own. They cannot articulate it as finely as a sculptor carves wood into a statue. Yet, like the Supreme Court justice who said he cannot define obscenity but he knows it when he sees it, children know quality time when they see it. And the quality time they see - or don't see - makes a mockery of the popular use of the term.When my son was four years old, all he knew about quality time was that he loved playing baseball. An early riser, he thought 6:45am was the perfect time every day to head into the backyard and bat a few plastic balls. He didn't know the difference between Tuesday and Saturday. What he did know was that quality time happened whenever Dad responded with a spontaneous "Yes!"

Real quality time, in the eyes of a child, is rarely planned in advance. The most meaningful moments in relationships often begin unexpectedly. My daughter frequently dips into her enormous reserve of energy to draw or paint or create something on the home computer. And always, she wants to share her achievement with Mom or Dad, whomever happens to be around."Look at this," "Come here, quick," and "Look what I've made" have been uttered at least a million times in our house just in the last 24 hours, it seems. My daughter believes, without ever having said it, that quality time means Mom and Dad will pause to focus on what she has done.How insensitive it would be to reply, "I can't look at your picture right now, but I will take you to soccer practice Saturday, and then we'll have real quality time."

To a child, real quality time is a "quality moment", and such moments require only eight seconds of attentiveness to acknowledge what our children are trying to show us.While most parents are not callously indifferent to their child's world of creations, they may inadvertently deliver an "I don't care" message. Not long ago, as I was typing away, my daughter came in to tell me something. She said a sentence or two, and left the room. I had no idea what she said. She might have wanted a quality moment. I hope it was not one in a series of moments that she'll remember as Dad not paying attention to her. These days when my children interrupt me without being rude, I try to stop what I'm doing and look them directly in the eye. That's the only way I can stop focusing on my own project and experience a couple of quality moments which, unlike quality time, are brief, unplanned, unscheduled, and unspectacular.

I play on a men's softball team whose members are all just old enough to have an informal team policy against running too fast. Most of us also take a vow against sliding because we would rather be out than hurt. On several occasions over the years, both on the bench and before or after games, a "How are you?" has turned into some very good conversations, sprouting seeds of friendship that can only blossom when two people get past the weekend's football scores and into more intimate talk about families, relationships, and dreams.

One good friend on the team always asks about my writing. I, in turn, challenge him on our "field of dreams" to finish that album he has been producing for a year or two in his spare time. Such quality moments "just happen".

Why the old view bites the dust

Popular "quality time" fails because it does not produce the expected results. It is not encompassing enough to produce meaningful, deeper relationships with people we love. While the implication is that quality time events will be pleasant, the implementation of quality time activities often falls flat. When the kids don't feel grateful enough for the much-anticipated quality trip to the park, or when they start elbowing each other and screaming, "You're on my side, you jerk" in the back seat of the car, the happy air quickly escapes from the quality time balloon. Such moments can even inspire parental resentment or anger, an ironic by-product of quality time.

Another big hole in the popular quality time argument comes from the simple observation of how children enjoy spending their time. Like a fall in a pinball machine, bumping quickly from one place to the next, their activity is apt to change several times every hour, from baseball in the yard to monopoly inside to playing with cars or dolls just about anywhere. Such playtime also includes occasional brushes past Mum or Dad to suggest a trip to the store for a new toy or to the fast food joint for a quick taco. My children, I have come to realize, expect me to say no to quite a few of their suggestions. They might mumble a complaint. A few minutes later, though, they're back in the yard conjuring up a new game with their neighborhood pals. The "no" is forgotten.

For kids eager to play, what really matters is that their parents are within range. Just by being around, we provide security and set boundaries for the children's activities."Are you going to be home today?" my children will ask.Yes."Hooray! So can we go out and play?"Yes. And off they go, to be seen only now and then until lunchtime. That's quality time on a child's terms.When my son or daughter says, "Can I help?" as I'm washing the car or fixing a dripping tap, quality time means more than being within range. It means saying, "Of course," and joyfully wasting the next 10 minutes with my "helper". Projects with young children as helpers always take longer. So what? Sometimes the children lose interest in less than 10 minutes and ask if they have to keep helping."No, go along and play," I say, with appreciation that although the project took longer than necessary, real quality moments occurred.

These spontaneous scenes of including children are of short duration, yet they build a trust that may last a lifetime. Dr. Melvin Goldzband, a psychiatrist, warns about "arcade parents" and "Disneyland parents". Although he finds many positive applications for use of the term "quality time", he is concerned about parents who take their children to big ticket activities while avoiding much personal involvement in their children's lives. Many parents, he says, define "quality time" in their own individual ways to suit their own purposes and capacities. Many of those parents feel quite guilt-ridden not only over their post-divorce relationships with their children but also over the divorce itself. It is not hard to see how clutching at the term [quality time], taking refuge in it, and beating it to death by overuse, can provide solace for those guilt feelings. Often, those parents genuinely feel that they are doing the best they can with and for their children. Often they are right. More often, they are not.

Time Giving Is Life Giving

In relationships of any kind, there is no substitute for time, period. Forget about "quality" time. A recent study found that husbands and wives spend an average of only seven minutes a day talking to each other. Numerous other studies reveal that many children, if not most, spend more time watching television than they do with their parents. Quality time is not the solution because lack of quality time is not the problem. The problem is with our misuse of time itself. We misappropriate our time so badly that only a few minutes a day can be squeezed out for the people we presumably love the most.

Many people describe their lives as crazy and chaotic. From the moment they wake up, they engage in one scheduled activity after another-their own and their children's. If it's not a child's ball practice or art class, then it's an evening meeting or a late business appointment. Each day becomes a shuffling act, and the much talked about "time when things slow down" never arrives. Never. Reallocating our time to allow for more unscheduled quality moments with loved ones is essential. It requires personal sacrifice, a phrase we don't hear much anymore. My children, for example, may never know, and don't need to know, that in recent years, I have been getting out of bed at 5:00 or 5:30 most weekend mornings. That is "my" time. There is no better time for me to write.When they roll out at 8:00 or 8:30, it's time for me to stop writing, for they will have something to ask me or tell me.

Their energy and enthusiasm will keep them darting past me every 23 minutes or so, all weekend long. No way can I respond if I'm absorbed in my writing or if I'm engrossed in other favorite projects or if I perceive the entire weekend as "my time." Anticipating real quality moments, on a child's terms, means knowing some of that time is their time literally, on a moment's notice.

Education Issues

Compiled by Jo-Anne Beirne

I would like to stress that some homeschoolers ' fears about educating their children through high school and to university are generally unfounded. The following set of articles, from a variety of sources, attempt to present a range of views that may encourage you to adopt the idea that education administrators and teachers are still talking about how to do things better and have not got things perfectly organised - educationally nor socially in schools; that there is flexibility in the system in every state and that universities have not made up their collective minds in concrete on the issue of university entrance.

Opening up the Options

Damien Murphy

Time magazine - Education section January 25 1993

Simon Fuller looked at his celebrating, beer-spilling friends packed into the Gold Diggers Arms Hotel in Geelong, Victoria, "and felt so lonely I could die." It was January 13th 1992. Says Fuller, now 19: "I'll remember that day as long as I live. Going down to the post office in the morning, opening the letter , seeing I'd passed my exams ... but not well enough to get into uni. After 12 years' school the system failed me and kicked me out."

Fuller had just finished the 1991 composite Higher School Certificate/Victorian Certificate of Education - the last time the traditional three-hour examination was used alone as a means of secondary school assessment in Australia's most educationally experimental state. Last month, 47000 Victorians completed a new VCE. It is a two year system offering 44 subjects and the removal of exams as the main assessment. Work throughout the year counts up to 75% in some subjects. The VCE is one of a plethora of recent reforms around the nation. Soaring retention rates have speeded the changes.

The overhaul of upper secondary schooling started in 1985. A report to the then Victorian Labor government by educator Jean Blackburn predicted rising retention rates and said the final two years' schooling should be combined into one course. Events overtook the prediction as youth unemployment rose sharply and employers demanded better qualifications. In 1971 only 30.6% of Australian secondary students stayed at school until year 12. By 1981 the figure was 34.8%. A decade later, in 1991, it had more than doubled to 71.3%.

The chairman of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board (VICAB), Howard Kelly, says that, despite constant publicity about the number of people completing secondary schooling who can't get into university, the VCE "provides young and old students alike with a range of options that did not exist before."

Victoria went furthest down the path of school-based assessment. Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory offer four courses in the final years with school based assessment. University entrance is determined by external exam. The South Australian Certificate of Education, which starts this year, is based half on external examination, half on school assessment. Western Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory have similar systems. New South Wales authorities adopted two courses for years 11 and 12: The Other Endorsed Studies course has a mix of school-based assessment and TAFE exams while the state's Board of Studies president John Lambert: "Perhaps we are more conservative in NSW, but I think the public support competition."

The federal and state education ministers' forum, the Australian Educational Council, is drawing up a national school curriculum. Dr Ken Boston; chairman of its curriculum and assessment committee, says a national school curriculum from kindergarten to year 12 should be ready by 1995, good news for the 70,000 Australian students who cross state borders each year. Boston is less confident about a national assessment scheme. Says Boston: "I don't think I'll see an Australian Certificate of Education in my working life."

The revamping of late secondary schooling in Victoria was painful. The former Labor government failed to spell out VCE changes, causing confusion and fear, which the Liberal-NP opposition used against Joan Kirner when she was education minister and later premier. Universities backtracked from initial support, with Melbourne University's vice-chancellor, Professor David Penington, campaigning successfully against common assessment tasks (CATS) as the sole means of measurement. Lately Penington has suggested his university might rely on externally assessed CATS for entrance.

The common assessment tasks require year 12 students to tackle set exercises worth 75% of the total score. Students complained that the CAT workload was too onerous, but Sean Clerehan, vice-principal at Marcellin College, in the Melbourne suburb of Bulleen, says the new VCE was a godsend to some students. "We had students pass by working steadily all year who could never have coped in an exam."

Last month Victoria's Kennett government received a report on the VCE saying the marking system for school-assessed work was open to cheating and to students getting unfair help from teachers, tutors and parents. But in their report Professor Tim Brown, of Melbourne University, and Professor Sam Ball, deputy president of the NSW Board of Studies, said of the Victorian changes: "Our recommendations build on the current VCE system and in no way invalidate its ideals."

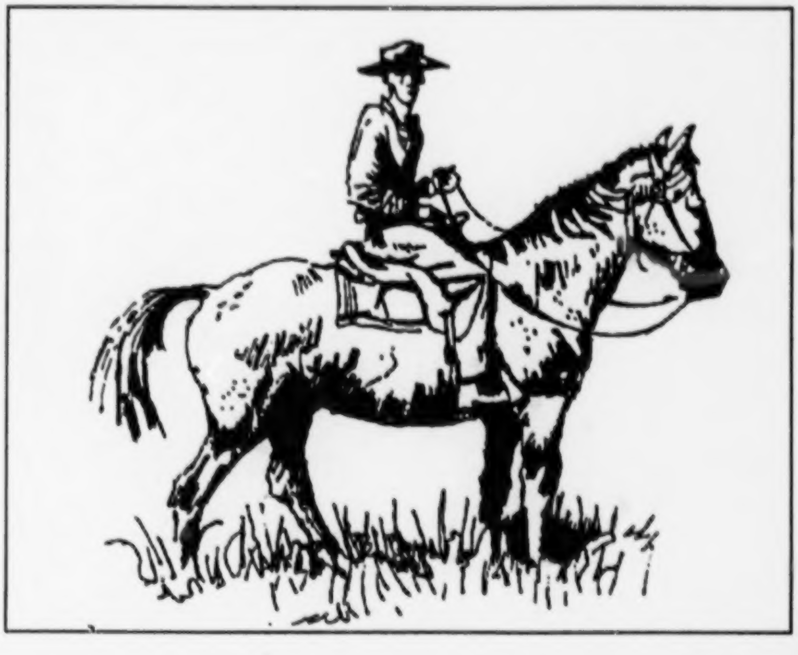
VICAB chairman, Howard Kelly, who was also principal at a Melbourne government secondary school during the stormy introduction of the VCE, says: "I felt like Mikhail Baryshnikov pirouetting on eggshells." Sometimes that meant coping with comments from teachers such as Brighton Grammar School headmaster Robert Rofe, who declared the VCE was "ideologically driven" by teacher unions and left-wing parent groups and "must inevitably lead to a lowering of standards."

After his desolate evening at the Gold Diggers Arms, Simon Fuller, from Breamlea, on Victoria's west coast, returned to school to do the new VCE and easily passed, doing subjects such as international, media and legal studies, none of which would have counted under the old system. He is confident he will be offered a place in Deakin University's arts faculty. Says Fuller: "I'm the sort of person that packs up in exams. I sweat, I panic, I can't think. With the VCE I knew how I was going all year. If I did badly on one assessment I'd work to bring my mark up on the next. It was hard, but I wanted to get to uni with my mates."

NSW Flexi plan for HSC Study

Sydney Morning Herald
Sian Powell Education writer
March 5 1993 p. 3

Students will be able to study the HSC for up to five years, repeat individual courses rather than the whole exam and use work and life experience for credit .... The paper (is) titled Advice to schools on Higher School Certificate Pathways ...... The Board of Studies also hoped to convince university chairs that the TER should be slightly differently composed....Year 11 will be designated as a preliminary course and the assessment component of the HSC will be conducted in relation to the HSC course only (yr 12)..Students beginning Year 11 in 1994 will be able to study the HSC over,up to five years. Students will be able to gain credit towards the HSC from TAFE and other courses from accredited providers.



Schools failing to confront a very real crisis

An ACT teacher says our education system succeeds only in perpetuating the mediocrity of the herd

(Both Joe Boehm and Drew Corrigan sent us this piece printed in the Canberra Times on Feb 3rd 1993)

It has been said so often that there is a crisis in our schools that it has become a cliche. Education costs rise but the quality of the product does not. Ask any teacher who has been in the classroom for more than 20 years to compare the quality of students today with what they encountered in the past. To a man (and in those days, most were men; the dominance of women is teaching is a relatively recent happening) they will tell you how today's school leavers would be unable to cope with the standards demanded in the '50s and '60s.

Of course this can be dismissed as not more than nostalgic boast; in the same category as reminiscences of standards in cricket or farming or manners. The difference is that these old chalkies have evidence in the form of exercises they set for their classes in days gone by. These are dated and might even be a source of amusement with their parsing and analysis, pounds, shillings and pence, latent heat of fusion and even the quaint requirement that students have some ability to locate places on a map. The fact is that today's students would be unable to tackle many of those tasks.

So what does that prove?

Only this: we have been so seduced by soft pedagogy assignments and excursions and projects and all the activity-based trivia that have found their way into our schools that our students are no longer required to learn anything - I mean, learn in a way that they know it and can make some attempt to reproduce or apply that knowledge.

You mean, regurgitate it!

Yes, I can hear the screaming jackals of mediocrity shouting it. That was one of the first big words they met in their education lectures and they have continued to use it ever since to shout down any attempt to ask students to memorise.

Did you have to memorise?

Sure I did. Wordsworth and Hopkins and Yeats; French irregular verbs and the properties of organic compounds. I never regretted that effort. I can still remember passages from Tintern Abbey and The Lotus-Eaters. I often go to Tennyson or Yeats when I need something to soothe, the way others go to Bach or Chopin.

That's elitist, surely?

Yes, of course, elitist and middle-class. Two favourite put-downs of the new orthodoxy. We have condemned today's youth to reading today's poets and then we ask them to make the sentiments their own. We encourage them to write their own poetry and tell them how good it is. We are not allowed to suggest that it is rubbish; that would be to give a sense of failure.

Do you think our schools are inefficient?

Without a doubt. A large measure of what passes for schoolwork is glorified day care.

Is that why so many women are now in teaching?

Be serious. Although the case can be put that in a society where the two-income family is increasingly the norm, babysitting may well be a necessary provision.

But what about parents' expectations?

By and large, parents don't give a damn. Go to a kindergarten anywhere in Australia on the first day of the school year, look at the faces - of the parents, I mean. What you are seeing is relief. They have done their five years of unpaid babysitting. Now it is the turn of the state to provide the service for the next 13 years.

Some children can almost read by the time they get to kindergarten?

Yes, there will be those who are reading and doing basic arithmetic at a level three years ahead of their class. This is very likely because they have been lucky enough to have a parent (most probably a mother) who took the time to teach the alphabet and how to read small words and sentences and even books. The parent also showed them how to count and add and take away and perhaps more.

But parents aren't professionals. Shouldn't they leave the job to those who can do it properly?

The fact is that these children have learnt more from their mother in five years than they may ever learn for the rest of their schooling. Unfortunately, they must now be dragged back to the mediocrity of the herd. They are condemned to boredom and in many cases to getting into mischief at school.

Facilities exist for dealing with slow learners or those who are behind with their age group. Why isn't some attention given to those who are ahead?

Because we are not allowed to say that some children are brighter or have reached a stage ahead of their classmates through working or having a mother who is a better teacher than the professionals. Such children are just as disadvantaged and out of place as those who have learning difficulties.

What does happen to them?

In a typical class in our primary schools the teacher directs her attention to the middle ground. She ignores the top third who know the material already and she tries valiantly to drag along the bottom third who are struggling. If she is an exceptional teacher she may well extend the bright students and get them to produce new work and to learn new skills. But that is rare and even where it occurs, it is temporary; for the following year, with a majority of teachers, their learning will stop while they wait for others' fruitless and half-hearted attempts to

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catch up. The treatment of clever or bright children in our schools is a disgrace.

But surely, that doesn't happen in high school? Here, each child has a number of teachers.

In fact, the situation is even worse. By now the brighter kids have found other things to do during class: talking, playing up, sending notes, being teenagers, A few minutes of homework each night will maintain their position at the top of their class: one-eyed creatures who are kings among the blind.

Aren't classes streamed?

Not on your life! Any mention of streaming will waken the jackals of uniformity once more. If Johnny is bright, then he must use that talent to help the others in the class. If in the process his performance suffers, that's too bad.

What do you suggest?

We should forget about year Seven and Year Eight and the lock-step approach to being in a certain stage of schooling at a given age. All students should be required to reach a certain level of knowledge and skill before they are allowed to move on to year 11. Students could achieve those levels in anything between two and five years.

Such a scheme would be a nightmare to administer.

For too long, schools have been run on a model which suited the school rather than the students. It would be difficult to program such changes, but it would not be impossible.

The lock-step model certainly seems to be inefficient.

I liken high school to a military exercise. We have to move a large army from A (primary school) to B (college in the ACT system). The army is placed in ranks, marshalled by busy teachers, making sure they all keep in step. If some members of the army are moving slowly, all have to move slowly; if some are moving too quickly, they are directed to the back in an effort to push the stragglers. And off to the side are academics writing reports on how best to move the army forward.

The requirement is that each group must take exactly four years to travel from A to B. It is little wonder that teaching no longer attracts the brighter students coming from our colleges. Most people choosing to go into teaching today are outside the top 40 per cent of academic achievers.

So in a few years from now, teaching will be a career for second-rate intellects?

Shaw's jibe that *"Those that can, do; those that can't, teach"* is in danger of becoming a reality.

More to teaching than chalk and talk.

The challenges that face teachers in the modern classroom

Geoffrey Maslen

From The Canberra Times Feb. 1993

Here they are. Lined up in the corridor outside the classroom door. Well, not so much of a line, more of a muddle of heaving bodies really. Then they march in or run, scramble, shove their way past, as if desperate to get to their desks which is a bit of a joke considering some will do not work at all for the next 40 minutes. There goes Leonie, two metres high and only 13. The tallest girl in her year, all knees, elbows and a giraffe-like neck. She ambles down the aisle, banging a row of heads with her bag, trailing shouts, curses and threats behind her like a noisy veil. And here's little Nick. A jockey-sized freckle-faced, jug-eared bundle of dynamite ready to explode at the slightest bit of friction. He reacts so violently to provocation that even the big kids are scared of him. He held an entire home economics class hostage with a fire extinguisher for two hours last week including the teacher who he finally let have it with a jet of CO2 foam. He then curled up into a whimpering ball for the rest of the day.

Down the back already is Kylie. All-knowing Kylie, chewing gum like Ms Mole herself and a sex kitten if ever there was one. Her mother brings home more boyfriends than takeaway dinners and some of them almost certainly spend the night in Kylie's bed. Beside her is Chris. Mousy Little Chris. Studious, quiet, a hard worker and never a boo out of him. His father took off last year and left mum and the four kids to fend for themselves. Chris suddenly became dad to the three younger ones; no wonder he always looks exhausted.

Anton saunters past with tiny

Kim Ng. Middle Europe and Asia are great mates. Anton's mildly dyslexic and sometimes as slow as a wet week. Kim's dad was a doctor in Indo-China and now he sweeps floors in a car factory but Kim is destined for great things in maths or science....

Every morning at school the teacher confronts 20 or 30 living histories, a milling crowd of immature characters who arrive with their baggage of family problems and fascinating potential. The classroom mix of personalities and peculiar behaviours poses considerable challenges for the teacher, not only devising programs that each student might find interesting but also in keeping the lid on sometimes irrepressible boisterousness.

How teachers respond to those challenges depends on their own experiences as learners - both in school and during teacher training - on the ethos of the school and on the particular class they are taking. The actual business of teaching is hugely complex and is much more difficult than most lay people think - much harder than mere chalk and talk, for example, or handing out worksheets and telling kids to get on with it.

Good teachers are constantly making intuitive decisions in class on how to handle a remarkable range of issues - resolve a row, say, or help a student understand a particular point or choose just the right moment to take the lesson on to another stage. Yet ask them to define what they are doing and they are as much in the dark as the rest of us.

Many primary and secondary teachers know in remarkable detail the personal and educational histories of the students they teach. If they have been in the school for a few years they will know the brothers and sisters, the children's friends, their parents and their past.

They will have watched the children grow and change and will have an informed opinion on where they will be when they finally leave school. Outside the school, teachers rarely tire of gossiping about their charges like doctors in a hospital with a ward full of patients. They often spend hours and expend enormous effort seeking ways to help a student who presents special difficulties, just as many devote much of their time after school coaching sports teams, running clubs, or ferrying children to and from other schools.

The constant interaction with youngsters who can be cheeky talkative, energetic, quarrelsome, rebellious, cruel, kind, happy and helpful - and that's just at the start of the lesson- makes great emotional demands upon teachers. These can be so exhausting the teacher simply burns out. That is one reason why many teachers keep their distance from the kids, why they retire to the blackboard in class, why they are seen as an alien race by students, quite unlike other adults they meet.

I remember being astonished in my first year at secondary school when I learned the head of science was going to marry the woman who taught home economics. The idea of a teacher having a normal relationship with another person seemed unreal. But then, look at it from the kid's point of view. You are made to go to school, whether you like it or not. There you become victim of a machine that organises every hour you are present, directs you to one place and then another, sits you down and stands you up , a machine that is run by peremptory adults who order you about, who sometimes shout and rage and try to bully you into subservience, who rarely if ever, ask your opinion and would doubtless ignore it if you offered an observation.

You are constantly told to sit still and be quiet - at a stage in your life when you are full of curiosity and want to talk about the world, about yourself and your relationship with others, when your body longs to be active, to be testing itself against new challenges, climbing higher, running faster, leaping further.

In the classroom, however, as in peace, nothing so becomes a child as modest stillness and humility. Noise is the great enemy in school. Although humans are the only animals who live to converse, who often value most the information that comes from listening and speaking, silence in the classroom for teachers is seen as success. So students are cowed into being quiet, bribed to conform, droned at until they are bored silly. Is it any wonder they sometimes create a riot?

The dilemma for the conscientious teacher is how to cope with school's contradictions. On the one hand, a teacher is supposed to be passing on to the next generation the accumulated knowledge and ways of knowing of a society - ensuring continuity of the future with the past. On the other hand children have to be prepared to deal with a world that is undergoing a transformation, to use the knowledge of the past without being limited by it, to understand that knowledge itself is problematical , that it is a human construct and therefore, should be thought of as a tentative subject to revision and reinterpretation.

How do you teach to inform and liberate?

Twenty years ago, a few teachers and I helped found a community school in Melbourne. We thought that solving the classroom dilemma was easy. You introduced far greater choice into the curriculum, handed responsibility for learning back to the kids, allowed each to work at his own pace and untied the leash. It did not quite work out like that. The students were teenagers and brought with them their own experiences of school and what they thought real learning was about. Most of the children were refugees from the authoritarian classroom and some used their new freedom to do nothing, at least nothing other than sitting around smoking, playing guitars and chatting. Some of us found this alarming while a few of the kids found the unstructured approach we adopted frightening. They wanted knowledge and understanding but were made anxious by the thought of uncovering it in novel ways outside the formal classroom.

The resolution of these issues was never going to be easy because it centred on the tension between emancipation and control, between process and content, between the teacher getting students to acquire a body of knowledge - the traditional purpose of the academic curriculum - and having them develop skills appropriate for life long education.

Today, the conflict is even more pronounced and it is felt in both the primary and the secondary school.

Students, young and old, are more assertive and more demanding. Many are no longer subject to the parental restraints of the past and are accustomed outside the school to an unprecedented degree of freedom. Meantime the pop Coca Cola culture of youth encourages contempt for most adults and their values.

At the top of secondary school increasing numbers of students are staying on because there is no work outside for them to do. They have different experiences, different interests and different ambitions from the minority who used to occupy the chairs in the Year 12 classroom. They object to one-voice lecturing, to abstract bookish learning. Teachers are caught in the middle of this. Whatever their critics might claim, primary and secondary teachers really do want children to do well at the traditional studies, they want them to be able to read and write and compute.

Yet most would also say that they want their young charges to become self-directed, socially-competent, independent, and these days committed more to collaborative rather than competitive ways of learning.

That means teachers must seek new methods that accomplish one goal without losing sight of the other. They must draw on academic curriculum, because to deny students access to the traditional disciplines is to deny future opportunities, while rejecting the conventional forms of its transmission.

How to do this individually and collectively is not easy. Teachers need help - from their colleagues, their principals, school councils and parents. The federal government has now promised a package of professional development reforms worth 130 million over the next three years.

That could be the catalyst Australian schools desperately need. Meantime, teachers ought to be urged to review their own habits and practices. They should aim to encourage autonomy in children rather than dependence, creativity instead of conformity, co-operation over competition.

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Dr Raymond and Dorothy Moore highly respected Christian educators and home-schooling advocates.

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Home Grown Kids The Book (Steps in Parenting)
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School Can Wait (research notes on why children should not start school early)
$18 (includes postage)

If you wish to purchase any of these books please send a cheque or money order to Homeschoolers Australia
P.O. Box 420 Kellyville 2153

Queensland

Carolyn Gibbs ,
Noosa Heads Qld

I promised Rachael that I would send you a copy of the account of the regional reps meeting that I had written for the "The Queensland Home Educator"- "Regional representatives meeting". During John Peacock's visit, the people who had helped to organise his speaking tour got together in Tamborine and made plans to keep the momentum going. The state camp/conference in March is the main event, but many other strategies to help home education grow were discussed and agreed upon.

These included:

- organise a state-wide association (along the lines of Victoria's AERG)
- aim for legislative change, with the Victorian/ACT models being the preferred goal
- undertake a publicity campaign to promote home education
- find allies among all groups with an interest in home education
- establish a fund to finance publicity, the dissemination of information and other activities
- compile information (research papers, newspaper articles, books, etc.) to support the case for home education
- devise emergency strategies to deal with investigations by social service officials
- appoint a negotiating team to represent Queensland home educators to the government and other organisations
- appoint a panel to vet research proposals involving home educators

These proposals and ways to put them into action will need to be discussed and developed by the Queensland home educating community, a process that will be given a kick-start by the camp/conference in March.

Western Australia

Sue Warner, H.B. L. N, Perth

RE: THE MEI CHENG COURT CASE

The homeschooling court case of Mei Cheng vs Kay Hallahan. The ex-(Labor) Minister for Education in W.A. will be listed very soon. The case number is 2075/92

An update on the situation in W.A. I have enclosed a draft of the policy statment sent to me by Greg Black, the Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Education, (the same Ministry official Gina Wright, Jo-Anne Beirne and I saw in November last year). All the homeschoolers I have consulted are very pleased with this draft and think that there has been great effort on the part of the Ministry to understand and accomodate the specific needs of Home-based Learners. Before I get too excited I am waiting to see the Procedure Manual. I hope the procedures are consistent with the ideals of the policy statement. I would like to thank Jo-Anne in particular for the generous and willing help she gave to us in working this through with the bureaucracy. The advice and support helped us tremendously in our negotiations. Thank you again for your contri-

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GETTING STARTED WITH HOMESCHOOLING

An Introduction to Home Education

South Australia

Eve Luick: Adelaide, SA.

An up-date on the situation here in SA. My experience with the bureaucracy to date has lead me to the observation that South Australia and Adelaide in particular, is not conservative by nature and still retains the pace-setting enthusiasm that was the mark of the Dunstan era, deep in its structure. It seems that the Department of Education in South Australia regards the legislation in New South Wales as giving homeschooling in Australia the official green-light-go-ahead.

Homeschooling has been given the stamp of approval - so to speak. In their willingness to co-operate with homeschoolers, South Australia is looking to New South Wales and importing the intention of the most up-to-date legislation in Australia. For this reason, they are even ready to make the distinction between registration and exemption in order to cater to differing philosophical motivations in choosing to homeschool.

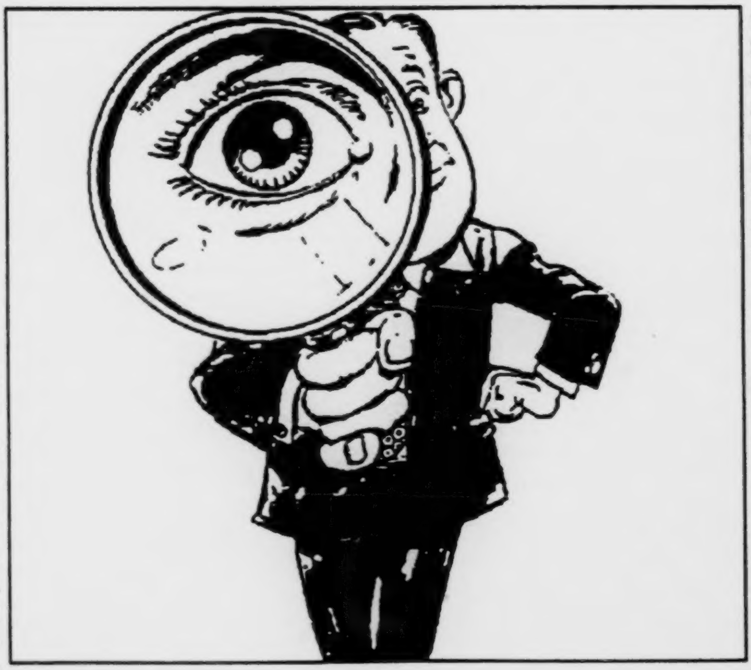
As an ex-NSW resident I am aware that while New South Wales legislation has provided a very useful model and springboard for designing legislation in other states, it would be foolish to suggest that this legislation is ideal to import directly without adaptation. There are specific conditions that exist in New South Wales that assisted in creating the supportive homeschooling environment New South Wales homeschoolers enjoy. In particular - a key factor is the separation of Board of Studies and Department of Education. Because homeschooling is not a Department of Education responsibility in New South Wales the application of regulations is freer and open to a wide range of acceptable interpretations. These conditions do not exist in other states. However, it is the strong open recognition of homeschooling as a viable educational option that has been most useful and helpful to us.

Here in South Australia, we are grateful that we do not have to convince the Department from scratch about the desirability of permitting homeschooling. In our discussions with Departmental officials, we are simply working on details to ensure we are able to enjoy educating our children at home legally.

In practical terms, this means being aware of what Education policies exist in South Australia, such as the introduction of second languages, what sort of educational material is considered racist and sexist, and so on. It also means ensuring our children have the key learning areas covered during the period they are registered as homeschoolers.

While this may sound intimidating to new homeschoolers, it must be understood that homeschooling is a serious undertaking and one that demands a high level of responsibility. However, having children has similar demands and most homeschooling parents have been demonstrating their commitment to their children since birth. The process of becoming a legal homeschooler is just another step along the way. Becoming aware of what education policies are and finding ways to incorporate these policies in a way that is acceptable to both family and state is one creative way of demonstrating that degree of commitment and intelligence. The fact that many families can and do succeed in convincing the Department they are capable of educating their own children without compromising their philosophical motivations is adequate demonstration that homeschooling is being treated with non-hostile and healthy respect.

In our discussions with the Department one of our major concerns was to ensure that families were able to have some access to a system of appeal if a registration or exemption was refused (as is done in NSW). This was considered reasonable and efforts are being made to design an Appeals mechanism. On the whole we have had very supportive and encouraging discussions with departmental representatives who are anxious that South Australia not trail behind with out-of-date policies and legislation. The final drafts are expected to be completed in late March or early April. I will keep you informed.



Your Ref

Our Ref 809/92

Enquiries

Branch

Ministry of Education
151 Royal Street, East Perth, Western Australia 6004
Telephone (09) 264 4111
Fax (09) 264 5005

Ms Sue Warner
18 Coongan Avenue
GREENMOUNT WA 6056

Dear Ms Warner

I am writing to inform you of the Minister's decisions following the 1992 trial of home tuition procedures. I would be grateful if you would convey the contents of this letter to other parents who share your interest in home tuition.

The Minister has directed that the following provisions for promoting reasonable and accurate assessments of home tuition programs be put into effect for a two year period:

1. The wording of the policy statement and procedures document should be clear and unambiguous and should be entirely consistent with the current provisions of the Education Act and Regulations.
2. Interactions between parents and administrators should be arranged for mutually convenient times and should follow set procedures on which both parties are well informed.
3. Children can be withdrawn from school in advance of parents having an education plan; however administrators should point out the advantages of advanced planning.
4. Ministry monitoring of provision should take place with adequate notice and not in the first term.
5. No electronic recording should be made of visits.
6. Witnesses for both parties can be present if requested.
7. Children could be assessed orally, but only for as long as there is no sign of stress exhibited by the child; the parents should have the right to be present during oral assessment and to terminate the interaction; the administrator should not report back to the parent in the child's presence.
8. Records of plans and programs should be acceptable in various forms in recognition of the diversity of philosophies and methods employed.
9. The criteria to be met should be clear, objective and consistent with legal provision, and not just oriented to a Ministry government school focus.
10. Copies of parents' plans and programs should be made available to the administrator as an essential part of the assessment process, but the originals should remain the parents' property.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

11. A full assessment of the program or plan should be provided to the home tutor as soon as possible after the assessment; formal recognition can take the form of a letter and/or a certificate, according to parent request.

12. Adequate explanation of the assessment and adequate time to redress inadequacies should be given, but actual assistance in rewriting plans should not be provided.

13. Disagreements between parties should be addressed in a productive manner. If conciliation is unproductive, appeals should be made to an unbiased body reporting to the Minister.

14. Before initial assessment of the plan and during any appeal, the child can remain at home, although administrators can advise on any perceived disadvantages of this course of action.

15. Advice on future pathways following compulsory education should be restricted to making parents aware of accreditation and certification issues.

16. The existence of community support groups should be brought to the attention of parents.

17. All administrators should be briefed on the Ministry's policy and procedures as soon as possible after being assigned responsibility for home tuition matters.

18. These procedures will operate for two years, from the commencement of 1993, for all home tuition cases and be reviewed at the end of that time.

I am confident that these provisions will do much to assist the process of assessment and approval of home tuition applications. Should you seek further information or clarification on any aspect of this correspondence, please contact Mr Peter Frizzell, Manager of Operations Branch on 264-4729.

Yours sincerely

GREG BLACK
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

3 February 1993

Introduce a friend to the Australian Homeschool Journal and get a $5 discount off your next order from the John Holt Bookstore

Sales Tax Exemption

Anna Adams & Jo-Anne Beirne

As always happens with any issue in homeschooling, there is no unanimous agreement from homeschoolers about any aspect of the desirability of compensation/ funding - no point that we can state "Well, at least we agree about that". We get many enquiries from homeschooling families concerning their eligibility for Sales Tax Exemption under Item 63A and understand that many families feel entitled to some government compensation for assuming the onus of educating their own children.

There are also many families who regard compensation as an invasion of their private lives. These families suggest there are no "free" gifts and any educational compensation will be accompanied by some sort of unwelcome regulation- regardless of what options are offered. The purpose of this article is not to tell other families which democratic option should be made compulsory for all homeschoolers, but rather, inform new and relatively isolated families what is being done and by whom. It is up to individuals to educate themselves and come to their own conclusions about these issues.

In 1992 the Beirne Family, as NSW registered homeschoolers, submitted an application for Sales Tax Exemption to the Taxation Department's Sales Tax Office. If the application had been successful we felt that it would have set a beneficial precedent for all homeschooling families. As we suspected we were denied this option because we do not fulfil the law requirement of being an organisation or institution whose primary concern is education. (The letter from the Tax Department follows this article).

The Australian Christian Academy (distributors of ACE materials) is possibly the only homeschooling organisation that could be eligible for Sales Tax Exemption because it is an organisation whose primary purpose is education. However, ACE is probably unable to take advantage of this because they have always been philosophically opposed to any government involvement with homeschooling.

Obviously it could happen that a group of homeschooling families forming an organisation and negotiating eligibility for sales tax. Of course one of the disadvantages of an umbrella organisation approach is that anything bought by the organisation would belong to that organisation and would have to be distributed/loaned to members through some mechanism or other. If anyone decides to pursue and develop this option, it could undoubtedly be activated through one of the various homeschooling newsletters.

Some facts regarding sales tax -

*All textbooks and all computer software are sales tax exempt already.

*Sales tax only applies to *new* goods, 20% of computers, art supplies etc.

*The onus of proof is on the purchaser that any goods purchased with a sales tax exemption is being used significantly used for educational purposes.

*Sales tax exemptions are not limiting in any way i.e. once you have exemption it applies to all goods that have sales tax applied.

Relative benefits

Philosophically, a sales tax exemption benefits the wealthy more than it does the poorer families, as it is the wealthy who already buy significant quantities of new goods. If a family resources and uses mainly second hand goods, sales tax exemption may either be no use or possibly could increase their access to new materials. However, the many families who are quite satisfied with the quality of second-hand goods may well find it more advantageous to opt for a government grant/ compensation or funding.

Government Grants

New Zealand and some states in the US give homeschooling families an annual grant or a scaled grant for each registered child they homeschool at the end of each registered year. This is given because it has been argued successfully that homeschooled children are just as entitled to their share of the tax-education dollar as the schooled children. It seems to us that Government grants are more equitable and give families greater freedom to decide how to spend their education dollar themselves. Perhaps, registration and government grants could be linked thus allowing those families who object to registration, the option of refusing government money.

The problem of working with homeschooling issues, politics, funding and legislation has been one of working for the greatest freedom possible for all families making the decision to homeschool. We feel as individuals we understand the difference between demanding a freedom and requesting financial assistance. While some families will assume worst case scenarios of control and takeover, the reality is that while there are many bureaucrats who will have no problem with this at all, there are others who will use financial requests as yet another reason to oppose homeschooling. We can't just hide and hope for the best. It is impossible to predict how long it might take to gain financial assistance for homeschoolers but we feel it is worth pursuing. Shyness on our part certainly won't gain homeschoolers any advantage as we have never heard of a government offering unsoliticited finanical assistance and think it is highly unlikely in the case of homeschoolers.

In response to those who are afraid that this action will provoke unnecessary political hostility, we do not feel that fear is an adequate objection to working for recognition that not only should homeschooling be permitted, it should be supported and encouraged in every way possible for the sake of our society and our children both today and in the future.

Australian Taxation Office
Jessie Street Centre
2-12 Macquarie Street, Parramatta
(P O Box 4220, Parramatta 2123)

Telephone : (02) 893 3327
Facsimile : (02) 893-3888

10 December 1992

Our Reference : STOT X-
Contact Officer : Steve Millward
Your Reference:

Mrs Jo-Anne Beirne
PO Box 420
KELLYVILLE NSW 2153

Dear Madam

SALES TAX : ITEM 63A EXEMPTION

Reference is made to your letter dated 30 August 1992 requesting exemption from Sales Tax pursuant to item 63A, First Schedule, Sales Tax (Exemptions and Classifications) Act 1935 in relation to Homeschooling activities carried on by you.

Item 63A exempts:

> "Goods for use ..., and not for sale, by a university or school conducted by an organisation not carried on for the profit of an individual."

For exemption to apply the legislation requires that certain conditions must be met. One of these conditions is that there is a "university or school conducted by an *organisation* not carried on for the profit of an individual".

Where a word or phrase is not defined in the sales tax legislation, reliance is placed on its ordinary, natural or popular mean. The word "organisation" is such a word and therefore, its popular meaning must be considered.

This office considers that the common or popular meaning of the word "organisation" does not extend to include an individual or household, and therefore, the terms of Item 63A will not be satisfied.

Another condition that needs to be met is that a body has a predominant aim of imparting knowledge as an object or an end in itself.

Sales Tax Ruling ST (NS) 3003, titled "Item 63A: Goods For Use By Certain Universities or Schools" sets out the Commissioners interpretation of Item 63A in the First Schedule, and paragraphs 3.24 to 3.26 of this Ruling discuss the issue of imparting knowledge, giving a number of examples of bodies that do, and do not, satisfy the guidelines.

Childminding centres, creches and playgrounds are not considered to be schools, by this Office, as their predominant aim is the care of children, even though some schooling activities may be carried out.

Similarly, it is not considered that the predominant aim of the household is imparting knowledge as an end in itself, rather it is the care and well being of the family as a whole.

Therefore, exemption from sales tax pursuant to Item 63A, First Schedule, Sales Tax (Exemptions and Classifications) Act is not granted.

Yours faithfully

J A SEBERRY
Deputy Commissioner of Taxation

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Homeschoolers in the Media

I am hoping, with help from you, to make a regular page that details homeschooling families' contact with the media. If you have an article printed about your family, or do a radio interview, or have any other media contact we would be really happy to include it in this section. Please send it to us with the name of the publication and date of publication and any comments you may have.

In this issue we have articles about four homeschooling families all of which generated lots of good publicity for home education .

We also would like to encourage people to contact their local newspapers to suggest the idea of an article on homeschooling, if you feel you are prepared to do this. Jo-Anne has helped a few people over the years become more confident with the media and is happy to talk to you before any interviews, if this would be useful. Phone 02 629 3727.

Parents Magazine

"Alternative Education", journalist Shane Collier, p 61, February/March, 1993.
The Braathen Family of Naremburn homeschooling Roald (6) and Douglas (8) in the "Barbara and the children work in what she describes as an 'enriched environment'." A positive article which describes their homeschooling experiences leaving aside more provocative issues .

The Daily Telegraph Mirror

"Home school scores top marks" (evening edition), journalist Frances O'Shea, Friday February 5th, 1993.
The Morrison Family of Newcastle homeschooling Samuel (7) & Jessica (5) in "a class of their own." Another positive article which mentions the extent of homeschooling and a brief history of regulations. Information supplied by both Board of Studies and Homeschoolers Australia.

Sydney's Child

Headline **"Sydney's Homeschooling"**, journalist Robyn Cusworth, p. 9, March, 1993.
The Mikhaiel family of Sydney homeschooling Hannah (11) and Naomi (8) "in a wide variety of ways including interstate travel as a family on business trips and observing the process first hand involved in wrting a book." This article also mentioned a very small survey undertaken by Sydney University student, Michelle Hughes, (3 families) who was surprised that children who were homeschooled benefitted socially as well as academically. Positively presented with reference to both Board of Studies and Homeschoolers Australia. Contact numbers included.

The Australian Women's Weekly

"School's in .....at home", journalist Elizabeth Johnston, p. 81, March, 1993.
The Jurth family of Redbank Plains near Brisbane homeschooling Levente (12) Kingas (11) Gejza (9) & Timea (8) overcoming numerous legal and welfare objections and confrontations to protect their children's education across a wide range of interests in Queensland. Great article showing truly committed parents. Background information supplied by Homeschoolers Australia.

Education issues in the Media

National war on sexism at school
Tele Mirror 13/01/93
A new policy aimed at overcoming sexual harassment will take effect in all Australian secondary and primary schools this year.The policy, backed by the Federal and all State governments, has been formulated because sexual harassment in schools has been found to be "endemic". The head of the working party which held a Federal Government investigation, Bruce Davis, said yesterday that harassment problems emerged as early as kindergarten and not enough was being done to encourage girls. "Four- and five-year old boys are already showing signs of considering themselves to be superior to women," he said. The policy tells schools to: Counter endemic sexual harassment and stereotyping of girls by male students and teachers in co-educational schools. Ensure that more attention is not paid to boys in class than girls and stop boys "hogging" equipment and activities. Stop role models identified in course material being predominantly male. Mr Davis, Secretary of the Tasmanian Educaton and Arts Department, said the problems were similar in all States and some were doing more to combat them than others.

UNI ENTRY REVIEW
Daily Tele Mirror 13/01/93
The Federal Government is set to reviw the university selection system, a senator revealed yesterday. Senator Terry Aulich, Chairman of the Senate Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Training, said the committee would review entrance procedures, becuse schools focused on preparing students for competitive university rather than providing a sound education. "The focus seems to be on scores ... there is not enough concern about whether the courses are suitable for young people," ... The Committee's reveiw would cover issues such as: Are young people choosing courses that are appropriate to their needs both at HSC and university levels? Are some young people who are better suited to TAFE being pushed into university because of parental ambitions or pressure from schools? Is the obsession-

with winners overshadowing the educational needs of all students in secondary schools? Are school curriculums being narrowed to meet the needs of university? Senator Aulich said the increasing competition for university places was forcing students to select HSC courses which would given them high marks rather than courses that really interested them. "Young people are still choosing courses on the basis of improving their aggregate and getting an improved score," he said. And he said ranking students against each other, largely on the basis of one exam, had no educational validity. Although educational authorities were trying to make the HSC more vocationally oriented, the entire system needed revamping, he said. "The system which operates, particularly in NSW, appears to be obsessed with this numerical ranking, regardless of what the Board of Studies or education minister's views may be,". Senator Aulich said the problem stemmed from the university entrance procedures in most States which also were fixated with marks, rather than students' individual abilities. "Schools do not exist simply in order to select an elite for university," he said. "That is one of their minor functions but most importantly they should be providing education for all the students in that school."

Watching TV may turn children to fat, researchers find

SMH 10/02/93

CHICAGO, Tuesday: Television may be contributing to a near epidemic of obesity among American children . A study published in the February issue of the medical journal *Pediatrics* said TV viewers' metabolisms fell below those of children who were just resting. "Television viewing has a fairly profound lowering effect on metabolic rate and may be a primary mechanism for the relationship between obesity and amount of television viewing," the study said. The study, by Memphis State University and the University of Tennessee in Memphis, was described as the first to explore the metabolic effects of television viewing. The researchers said obesity had become a near epidemic in the United States, affecting as many as 25 percent of children and about 30 percent of adults. According to a 1985 survey, American children aged six to 11 watched about 26 hours of TV every week - as much time over a year as spent in school

Schools neglect teens: report

SMH 10/02/93

CANBERRA: Students in their middle years of schooling have been neglected by a system which has failed to catch up with changes in the past decade, and an immediate review is needed to help them develop intellectually, emotionally and socially, a study has found. The government study claims Australian teaching methods have placed too much emphasis on developing the skills of children up to Year 5 and of those completing their last two years at school. It says children between Years 5 and 10 - aged between about 10 and 15 are at a crucial developmental stages of their lives and should be encouraged to move from dependence to independence. The main function of middle schooling, referred to in the report as the "forgotten years" and the "Cinderella section", was to ensure students developed intellectually, emotionally and socially, and to encourage them to see connections between school experiences and their future lives, the report said. *In the Middle*, which was released by the National Board of Employment, Education and Training's Schools' Council, a government advisory body, was based on research done last year with parents and more than 36 Australian schools. He said teachers needed to adopt a more flexible approach to teaching these students and instead of teaching them from the front of the classroom, they should organise them in small groups, according to their ability and age, to allow them to think for themselves.

An unsung (self-educated) hero of medical technology

SMH Feb 18th 1993

Mr Vivian Richard Ebsary, AM, a remarkably talented yet unsung hero of medical technology for more than 35 years, died peacefully in Sydney last Thursday. He was 87. The engineer, who was born on May 12, 1905 at Narrogin, Western Australia, and left school at 13, devised life-saving devices used in hospitals the world over, including a heart/lung machine. Mr Ebsary, a one-time fitter and turner, settled in Sydney in 1927 specialising in precision engineering and later founded Ebsray Pumps Pty Limited, in Brookvale. He co-founded the Institute of Automative Engineers of Australia in the early 1930's. In his spare time, Mr Ebsary developed an anaesthetic machine appropriate to the needs of children at the Hospital for Children, Camperdown. He developed a hypo-thermia machine which could lower a patient's body temperature, allowing the heart to be stopped for up to six minutes without damage to the rest of the body. He worked as a voluntary member of both the cardiac team at Camperdown and a Sydney University experiment team and, in 1959, developed the Ebsray heart/lung machine which enabled surgery on the heart for up to an hour. In 1968 he helped develop a hyperbaric oxygen unit at Prince Henry Hospital which sill treats patients with burns, gas gangrene and the bends.

10pc cannot read or write - survey

Sunday Telegraph 14/02/93

An estimated 10 percent of Australians over 15 are functionally illiterate - that is they are unable to understand properly documents, simple arithmetic and newspaper reports essential for full participation in modern society. A Federal parliamentary report, Literacy Challenge, found that one in four children finish primary school with inadequate literacy skills. Apart from the huge human costs associated with reading and writing difficulties, including low self-esteem, low levels of health or poverty, there are also significant economic costs for society. While the degree of illiteracy, or "problems with the reading and writing" as the experts prefer to say, varies across the social spectrum, so too do the reasons behind the problem. "I think people are often surprised there are adults from English speaking backgrounds in Australia who have difficulty with reading and writing because they presume everyone has access to schooling. It's free, so why can't everyone read and write?" says Sue Sim a member of the NSW Adult Literacy and Numeracy Council. And from the *Canberra Times 03/02/93* **Child literacy 'Inadequate'** Queensland Labor backbencher Mary Crawford "although the committee had found no hard evidence that literacy standards had risen or declined over time, "it is also unacceptable that the actual numbers of children with such problems are not known."

Teenagers increase grog binges

The Daily TeleMirror early March '93

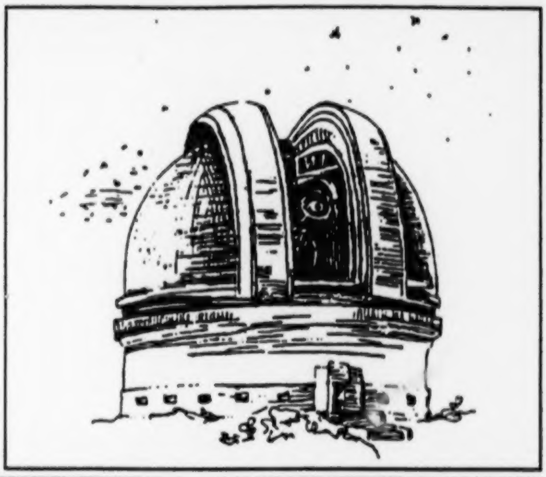
Binge drinking among Australian children is increasing and teenage girls are just as likely to get drunk with their mates as boys, according to a study of more than 10,000 high school students. Most teenagers surveyed regarded alcohol as the safest drug. This is despite the fact that alcohol plays a part in 60% of the deaths in the 15 to 34 age group. The survey by the drug foundation of Victoria, shows an alarming lack of understanding by teenagers. The report's author David Crosbie said "How can we tell our children they shouldn't drink too much when they see their mum or dad binge drinking?" Children are bombarded with images about drinking.

Teacher gives cigarettes to 6 year olds.

Daily Telegraph Mirror 12.3.93

A primary school teacher has been suspended for giving 22 of her six year old students cigarettes to smoke....... She had seen reports this week by a Sydney University professor urging the practice. Professor Stephen Juan proposed all children aged five and six should be made to smoke one cigarette during their first year at school in the hope they would be sickened by the experience and would never smoke again. Mrs Clark (from the Catholic Education Office said "I think it is absolutely ludicrous to expect that children aged 6 could possibly make an adult, lifetime decision not to smoke".......

Resources



Questacon Canberra

Jo Boehm

Canberra is home to a wonderful resource for homeschoolers - Questacon - The National Science and Technology Centre. Not only are the galleries packed with hands-on exhibits ranging from Biology to Physics to brain puzzles, but the Questacon shop provides many resources to take home.

Questacon is situated close to the City Centre near Lake Burley Griffen. Admission is $18.00 per family. Be prepared to spend the day as the four galleries will take a while to get through. The exhibits change periodically although some displays are permanent. The latest addition is the Environment Exhibition in Gallery One. This covers a broad range of issues. It makes the visitor aware of the impact our everyday activities at home have on the environment, with a stylised walk-in house. You can also find out how and why some animals and their habitats are endangered. By using a touch-screen you become knowledgable on the Greenhouse Effect.

In each gallery you will see people wandering around in blue jackets. These are the explainers. They are always friendly and very willing to explain the workings of the various exhibits. If there is a puzzle you just can't solve, they are there to help although they give clues and only give answers if you are really desperate! The explainers also present regular shows (usually twice a day) in Gallery two which last for 15-20 minutes. We have seen a presentation on the habits of koalas, another on the discovery and workings of the circulatory system and one on the science of various structures (bridges etc).

The Questacon Shop contains a small but interesting range of books relating to science issues. There is a selection of games and "toys" designed to show a variety of scientific principles. For example, you can buy bouncing putty. It changes shape and is soft like plasticine but if you roll it into a ball and drop it onto a hard floor, it bounce like a rubber ball. The putty is a substance called polyboro-siloxane. It is actually a fluid that has very large, long molecules which cause it to act the way it does. Pull it apart very quickly and it is like cutting it with a knife. stretch it slowly and it's like chewing gum. Great stuff! Unfortunately I think some of the items are over-priced.

Another item available from the shop is the Exciter Pak. (Exciting Science Technology Resource Paks). Currently there are only four types of Paks for sale with the promise of more to come. They are titled "Bubbles", "The Environment", "Music" and "Balloons". The kits contain virtually all you will need to conduct a series of experiments on the given topic. With "Environment", you investigate air pollution, study the effects of sewage and learn about acid rain. All of the equipment is packed in a plastic container and is accompanied by a booklet of detailed instructions. They retail for about $7.00 (P & P $2.00)

During the school holidays the Centre conducts a series of 3 day programmes for children up to the age of 12 years. They also have several excursions. The sessions have titles such as "Light & Colour", "Kids in Space" and "What's Inside?" For non-members the cost is $25.00 for 3 x90 minute sessions. An excursion costing $5.00 for non-members may be similar to the one "Freshwater Ecology" where the children were able to use water testing kits and microscopes.

The Manager of Education Projects at the Centre, Brenton Honeyman, is very amiable and helpful. the Centre conducts teacher and workshop programmes and Brenton was quite open to the idea of such workshops for homeschoolers when and if there was sufficient interest. Hopefully homeschoolers will be able to access their facilities more fully in the future.

In addition the NSTC produces "The Questacon Magazine", which costs $10.00 for 4 issues. (Subscription is free with membership to Questacon) Although only about 20 pages, it is a high quality publication containing many interesting articles, activities and a calendar of events Australia-wide.

So next time you are down Canberra way you may want to take advantage of this wonderful facility in the Nation's capital. We're not all politicians down here you know.

To order the wall poster of program times or any of the support material visit your local ABC Shop or phone or write to Ashton Scholastic P.O. Box 630 Gosford 2250 Ph 008 800 150

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OTHER RESOURCES

Colour with Numbers
Numberworks Maths Schools covers the NSW maths syllabus from Kindergarten to Year 10. Teaching centres at Chatswood, Mosman and Pennant Hills. Ph: 419 8000.

Ballet & Yoga
Dougherty Community Centre, Chatswood offers courses in painting (water colour & craft), pre-school music and movement, music with babies, square dancing, ballet, tai chi & yoga. Ph: 419 2555.

Acting
Mona Vale Film & TV Centre - Children's classes offered including live-in film camps, adult classes also available. Ph: 997 4222.

The Cottage, Mosman
Day & evening courses for adults and children - various classes offered covering exercise, arts and crafts, and music. Ph: 908 2102.

North Sydney Leisure Centre
Various courses for adults and children including exercise, self defence, dancing, photography, writing, reading groups, bush walking, theatre workshops, arts and crafts. Ph: 922 2299.

Willoughby Park Centre
Adults and childrens program (Saturday workshops also) - Children: gym, visual arts, gymnastics, drama, drawing, languages, music; Adults: yoga, play reading, self defence, Japanese, ufrniture restoration, photography. Ph: 967 2917.

Photo Competition
Heritage Week Photo Competition, Sutherland Shire - designed to encourage amateur photorapy of historical aspects of the Shire during the preceding 12 months. The date has already passed for this year, however you might want to write it on your calendar for next year.

Education Resource Centres (ERC)
Many ERC's run courses to help parents in the commmunity. Obviously they do it from a school perspective nonetheless you may find them interesting. Upcoming courses include Parent Update/Helping your Child with Reading; Parent Update/Study Skills and Teachers & the Community. Contact Sue Cass 763 1400 for more details about Strathfield ERC's presentations. (Thanks Alanya Sutcliffe.)

Continuing Education - University of Western Sydney
Short non-degree courses covering general interest, business, professional and computing areas. Westmead, Kingswood and Werrington campuses. Ph: 678 5400.

Aero-Gramme
Aero-Gramme is a magazine for those interested in alternative schooling. For further information: 417 Roslyn Road, Roslyn Heights, New York, NY, 11577. Phone 0015-1-516-621-2195, fax 0015-1-516-625-3257.

New Horizons
Latest issue of New Horizons computing magazine is out now. Free call 008-023-069, free fax 008-808-656.

Open Learning Australia
Open Learning offers all Australians an opportunity to study university courses for credit towards university degrees - established by Monash University in association with other Australian universities, with the support of the Commonwealth Government and the collaboration of the ABC. For further information, write to GPO Box 444, Melbourne, VIC, 3001, phone 13-29-29 or fax 03-204-8990.

Railway Building
A course on the hobby of building and running a model railway system is available at the Manly Warringah Community College. Making the engine, carriages and track along with designing the layout with scenery, buildings and bridges is a creative exercise which draws on artistic skills. Ph: 913 8766.

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An updated catalogue and directory of learning resources. An inspirational tool and guide for new and experienced homeschoolers.

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*** 20 Inexpensive Ways to Access Educational Resources in the Community. * A detailed list of Homeschooling Books - a range of books that can help you decide the how to, wheres, whens and whys of home education. * A national list of Homeschool Support Groups, Newsletters, Contacts & Products. * Some Educational Resource Information for the A.C.T., N.S.W., Western Australia, Victoria, Tasmania, S.A..** Especially places to visit, museums etc. for N.S.W. The aim being to create ideas for pursuing educational alternatives rather than creating a definitive list for each state.

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Resource Book
for Australian Home
Educators
2nd Edition

An updated catalogue and directory of learning resources. An inspirational tool and guide for new and experienced homeschoolers.

Published by
Homeschoolers Australia Pty Ltd ACN 003 [illegible]
P.O. BOX 420 KELLYVILLE 2153 NSW

This Resource Book does not claim to cover the depth and breadth of educational resources that are available in local and state communities, far less the national arena.

The information we have compiled is merely meant to provide a guide and an inspiration about what is possible, if we only look around. We hope we can all learn that our world is our best educational resource.

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- PARENTAL COMMITMENT GIVING INFINITE REWARDS
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WHERE TO GET THE HOME GROWN KIDS VIDEO

AUSTRALIA

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UNITED STATES

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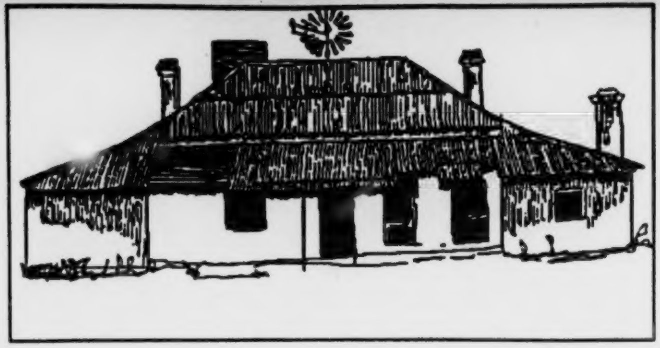
98607 U.S.A



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Homeschooling events **for more information see page 10 this edition.**

MARCH

*** Queensland Home Education Conference March 22nd to 25th**
At Eaton Hills, near Brisbane. Contact Rachael Hearn on 075 436 451

*** Sydney Computer Workshop Sunday 28th March**
10 a.m. -4 p.m. Displays of computers If you wish to register and find out more details contact Jo-Anne Beirne 02 629 3727 or Bill Chalker 02 4844680

APRIL

*** SEMINAR Sunday 18th April**
Homeschooling Seminar at Kellyville Sports Centre, Memorial Drive, Kellyville 2153. 1 - 5 p.m. Cost $20 per family, $15 per family for those who have already attended one of our homeschooling seminars in the past. If you are interested you must contact to RSVP. Jo-Anne Beirne 02 629 3727 for more details.

*** Monday April 19th**
Regular homeschool meeting at Kellyville Park, Memorial Drive Kellyville. See March 16th information. Ring Jo-Anne Beirne 02 629 3727, Dodie Conway 02 6394858 for details.

MAY

*** SEMINAR Sunday May 18th.**
Homeschooling Seminar at Bathurst E.R.C. cnr George St Bathurst. 1 - 5 p.m. Cost $20 per family, $15 per family for those who have already attended one of our homeschooling seminars in the past. Topics covered -resources, books, socialization, success, experience, practical issues, structure, programming & evaluation ? What is required of me, legally ? If you are interested you must RSVP. Jo-Anne Beirne on 02 629 3727 or Marcelle Foundling on 063 322 132

JUNE

Central Queensland Homeschooling Get Together, 7-14 June 1993. Send a non-refundable $5 deposit to Kathy Boles 2 Richard St. Emu Park 4702 for more details ring 079 396 213. The aim is to get to know and support each other and have a good time.

OCTOBER

NSW Homeschooling Conference??
Contact Jo-Anne Beiren 02 6293727 for more information.

Australian Homeschool Journal

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Ideas or opinions expressed in articles and letters are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editors and publishers of this journal.

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Australian Homeschool Journal

Issue 39

May/June 1993

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About the Editor
I am a 36 year old happily married woman, to my beloved (patient & enduring) husband Greg. We have always homeschooled our four children. Gregory is nearly 13, Rebecca 11 years, Stephen nearly 9 and Mary-Beth 3 years. We live about 45 kms from Sydney on a 5 acre block where we don't grow our own produce, have horses nor even chickens - we tried it but we just aren't farmers ! We try to support, encourage and challenge homeschoolers, with varying degrees of success, failure & reward. We are committed to information dissemination about the option of homeschooling so that others can learn about this important moral, social and academic alternative to traditional schooling.

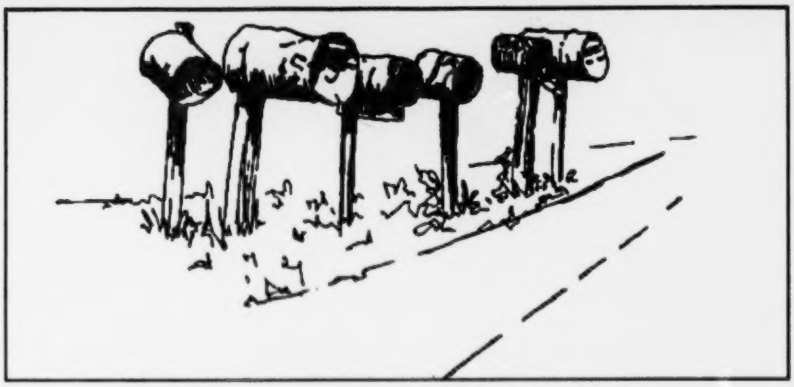
Contributions to this journal are warmly welcomed.

Networking & Support Groups

I wish to continue to update the support groups contact list. If you want to be listed anywhere in this great country, please tell us about your group.

Homeschoolers Australia P.O. Box 420 Kellyville 2153.
Thank you.

Letters
Letters
Letters
Letters



Learning Resources & Materials

Julia Boxx Mudgee NSW

We recently came across an excellent and inexpensive set of resource materials. These are the Peter Leyden's Resource Book School Project booklets. Titles in this series "for study, reference work and cutting up at home or school" cover eighty-plus Australian and World topics concisely but in detail and with colourful poster lift-outs. Prices for individual project books range from $1.50 to $3.20 and can be purchased from newsagents and selected bookshops from Leyden House, PO Box 77, Artarmon, NSW 2064. Titles include "The Anzac Story", "Pollution", "Australian Mammals", "The Drug Problem", "Japan", "The Arab World", "Stone Age Man", "The Olympic Games", "The Story of Energy", "Early Sydney & The Rocks", "The Universe and Earth" and many more. New titles are added regularly, and all titles are listed on the back of each School Project booklet. The booklets are great for any age level and can be used over and over in all sorts of ways.

Another resource our family makes frequent use of is free pamphlets. These can be picked up or written for from almost anywhere - museums, special exhibits, national parks and tourist-attraction centres, businesses, manufacturers, government and private agencies and industries (we got some terrific ones when visiting the NSW Mapping Authority, by writing to the National Philatelic Centre and even from a trip to our local abattoir!). Free pamphlets make a great addition to the family's library and provide information not available elsewhere. So keep them in mind. Learning is largely free or often no more than the cost of a phone call or postage stamp. Happy Homeschooling!

Board of Studies Education Resource Materials

Duncan Sutherland, Manager Product Development & Marketing Group

I have pleasure in notifying your organisation about the Board of Studies February 1993 Education Resource Catalogue. The Board of Studies has maintained a strong commitment to the concept of homeschooling and Board Officers have sought to support parents in this endeavour wherever possible. The Resource Catalogue contains a wide range of products which I am sure homeschoolers will find interesting and helpful. Please note that all products may be purchased by telephone or mail order and that the Board offers customers a full money-back guarantee on all products. If you would like a catalogue or to obtain further information about any of the Board products, contact the Sales Clerk by telephone on (02) 925 8178 or fax on (02) 956 5205

Travelling Art Exhibition

Joanne Brugmans Sphinx Rock NSW

We recently enjoyed "Picture This", an exhibition of children book illustrators compiled by the Book Illustrators Guild of NSW at our local (Tweed) art gallery. This exhibition is on tour thorough the State Library of NSW and will move on to Tamworth next then Dubbo, then to Taree. The exhibition as well as having many excellent displays has a video to watch about book illustrators and their work.

Learning Morse Code

Jerry Mintz Roslyn Heights NY, USA

As I mentioned in *AERO-GRAMME #9*, I developed a technique for teaching the Morse code to people who were interested in getting their amateur radio license. For example, one of the first people I taught was David Browde, who is now a newscaster on NBC. A homeschooler on one of the computer networks heard about this and asked if I could make a videotape of it, which I finally did. The results have been pretty spectacular. With this technique, people can learn all the letters in less than 25 minutes! In fact, the tape consists of my teaching two 12 year olds in less than 20 minutes each. Ben and Sylvia Olson who got a prototype tape wrote an amazing review of their experience with the tape for the Seven Seas Cruising Association Bulletin: "The results were nothing short of astonishing: both of us, after watching 20 minutes of the video 'Code Crash', knew the code for every letter of the alphabet. If you want to learn the code, we highly recommend the 'Code Crash' video". From that recommendation we received over 75 orders for the tape. Another man got the tape for his daughter. He mailed a note to me: "Jerry, it really works. My daughter learned the entire alphabet and all the numbers in a single sitting - then started sending me code faster than I could take it down.". We're selling the tape for $US22.00 postpaid, and looking for a possible distributor.

Mothers and Teachers

Anne Jackson Lismore NSW

We are in our fifth year of home schooling and as each year passes, it makes more and more sense. We have eight children, three daughters and five sons, aged 21, 20, 12, 10, 8, 5, 3 and 1. They are Erin, Christopher, Manette, Brendan, Kieren, Dominic, Callan and Jasmin. Our eldest daughter is married and expecting her first child at the end of this year. She and her husband have already made the commitment to home educate their children. Although she lives in another town, Erin is a passionate supporter of home education, attends all of our get togethers and has been my staunchest ally over the years ... so much so that she would drive home in between lectures at university last year, to help tutor her siblings. It is difficult to convince outsiders of how fulfilling the lifestyle is, but the reward of full time motherhood is tenfold. I recently met a mother who felt pressured into giving up the thought of making the commitment as her child's teacher told her, "You can't be a teacher and a mother too". What an amazing remark. Was she not worthy to be both until the magic day they walked through that school gate where they finally became "enlightened beings"?The saddest aspect of this comment is the assumption that teachers not parents are the "first and foremost educators" whilst parents are only the auxiliary helpers. No wonder schools then feel free to run "parenting courses" for many parents who feel undermined, even in their parenting role.

A support group for people with 6 and unders

Fiona Manuel St Mary's

Jo-Anne I am interested in starting a suport group for mothers in the outer western region who intend to homeschool but have children that are 6 and under. I am planning a first up discussion day on September 28th at Erskine Park Community Center cnr Peppertree and Swallow Drive - a really lovely indoor facility that caters for kids and has tea making, tables and chairs for littlies and mothers. Bring your own lunch. Cost $2 per family (to cover the hire of the hall - given it may well be fairly cold that day) from 10 - 2pm. Contact Fiona Manuel on 623 3257 for more information and to RSVP.

Homeschooled kids out in the real world

Ann Cabanas-Brown Texas, USA

Anne Cabanas-Brown a homeschooler from Texas wrote in *AERO-GRAMME #10* about her children's involvement with the Clinton for President campaign:

"Last March Konrad (then 12) decided that he wanted to work for Bill Clinton. Okay, we said. We didn't realise that he actually meant it. He looked up the Harris County Democrats, called them up, and since it was so early in the political season, he got right in with the delegates. He started off making phone calls, made lots of friends and by May he had already met Bill and Hillary. He went to the Conference of Mayors where he sat and talked to Clinton, and a few weeks later, they talked about allergies. He almost went jogging with him, but didn't have shorts so he passed. Along the way he worked daily at the party office. By July he had (younger brothers) Anson and Marcel working with him, doing everything from answering questions about Clinton policies to faxing confidential stuff all over the country ... I was shocked the first time I walked in and found Marcel at the front desk! I can't tell you what positive press homeschooling has gotten in this process.

They had a luncheon with Governor Ann Richards, of Texas, who heard what an asset the kids had been, and asked if they could help in her campaign. They had pictures taken with all of them. Even Jesse Jackson insisted on having one. They also spent some time educating people in the party about homeschooling. Gil Brown, their father, said that the kids were often there from 9 - 6 or later. Ultimately, they were invited to the inauguration, given VIP passes to the White House, and even appeared on CBS Sunday Morning and McNeil Lehrer, MTV and local media a dozen times. Sacha even spelled P O T A T O on the 10pm news. That's all the glamour - but the fact is, they worked very hard. The adult volunteers looked to them to answer questions. Marcel was in charge of the Clinton-Gore store and directed the adults who worked. Konrad was the right hand for the coordinator of over 3,000 volunteers. The Clinton-Gore folks were tremendous mentors.

Fr de la Tour Goulburn

I found issue 38 of your magazine more "substantial" than the ones before. There were some very interesting articles (on reading, etc.). I finished the book "Dumbing us Down". I am in full agreement with John Taylor Gatto's criticism of compulsory mass schooling. But I disagree with his overemphasis on what Rousseau called "negative education" (the child learns alone). Once again, the Catholic philosophy of education is a balance between the mechanistic drudgery of modern schools and the unrealistic theories of some educators who simply forget original sin (fallen human nature with ignorance, laziness, etc.). These questions are fundamental. Should education consist exclusively of development from within or is there also a formation from without (by a good teacher)?

Amanda Thompson Warners Bay

We started a trial-run homeschooling in November 1992, for my daughters Katie (nearly 6) and Emma (4) to see if they could learn what they needed to learn, I could keep up the household responsibilities and we could all stay sane all at the same time. Well, we're all still sane (I think) and in fact I think our life together has improved. We are all learning constantly, in fact my children have taught me much (is that how it's meant to be?). I am finding our home school goes best when we cruise along not worrying what others think, but when what we do at home school is a result of others' criticisms, in a defensive way, then the ship begins to go a bit off course. For example, I may panic and do more work books, to have proof of the work we do, which results in the girls revolting. I am slowly becoming more confident and the support group in Newcastle (which is wonderful) helps prop up the confidence that is lacking.

I must constantly remind myself that I don't have to prove myself to others but get on with the adventure of learning with my children. I am also learning not to panic when we have a hard day or two, because so often the day after there are encouragements and indications from the girls that they are learning much and using what they learn. Thank-you for your journal, it is very encouraging. I am presently awaiting a visit from an inspector to approve our registration for homeschooling.

NSW Home Education Camp

Joanne Brugmans Sphinx Rock NSW

Thanks for the package of John Holt Bookstore catalogues. We took some of your catalogues to a local market yesterday - we had a stall making and selling candles as well as giving out home education information. There was some interest. I've booked Yarrahappini Ecology Centre, Grassy Head, near Macksville NSW for September. So it is a Home Education Weekend Get Together from 2:00pm Friday 10th September until 2:00pm Sunday 12th September. The cost is $9.00 per person (over 5 years) per night. As Ehvam Vecellio described it before the first Yarrahappini - "Timber bunkhouses nestled in rainforest by the beach - an inspiring place!" I describe it as "the most beautiful place on earth" - if ever I was going to say that about any place. Bedding, pillows and food need to be brought. Great kitchen and dining facilities with ample fridge and food storage space available. The rooms are of differing size and will be allocated according to the size of the families or groups coming. I'm the contact person - Joanne Brugmans, Kyogle Road, Sphinx Rock via Uki, 2480 (066) 89 7473. It should be well attended.

We've just returned from the Queensland Home Education Camp/Conference. It was really terrific to see you there and I'd like to thank you so much for all the help and support you have given the Queenslanders. Your input at the conference was useful and empowering. As someone who has attended quite a few home education gatherings in Eastern Australia over recent years, I'd like to say that I've never seen so many cars ever before. We were not counting heads and there were not hundreds of people but the numbers were impressive. The Queensland people are getting things together and I'm sure when the time is right will handle their difficult legislation situation well. Their immediate action will be in the networking line, building up the grass roots level of home educators and supporters in their state. I personally believe this to be a very good approach and know they will do it well.

North Coast Newsletter

Stephanie Armstrong Lismore

I am the editor of the local Nth Coast newsletter. I can be contacted at 1/5 Anstey St Lismore 2480 or on 066 891435.

Seminars

Sharon Kickert Riverstone NSW

Thank you very much for the lovely seminar-discussion we had last Sunday. We really appreciate yours and your kind husband's hard work in supporting and encouraging us and promoting home schooling. I am still apprehensive about my capabilities as a teacher though. At times I feel so exhausted mentally and physically, so I'm hoping that by research and discussion with other homeschoolers will give me the confidence to pursue it any way. I intend to come to the many discussions you hold to keep me fired up.

Collen Keeley Marrickville NSW

Thank you for a most informative seminar held at Kellyville. I was very committed to the notion of homeschooling but the seminar greatly reinforced my convictions and ironed out a few wrinkles, so to speak.

Americans want more information from home-schoolers in Australia

Carrie Sutherland St Louis, USA

I have been homeschooling for the past six and a half years - the first two and a half in Britain, and the past four here in the US. This summer a few mothers and I plan to have our children work together and learn to cooperate with one another. There will be six children, ages 11 and 12, three boys and three girls (five are American, one is British). They will meet twice a week for two hours each time. I am responsible for the activities in July, and plan to study Australia with them. Do you have any information you can send me on homeschooling in Australia? The children will find that more relevant than just learning how traditional schooling is set up. Any other suggestions, information or contacts will be gratefully received. 718 Lami, St Louis, Missouri 63104, USA.

Sandra Merrion Indiana

We are homeschoolers who are planning a gigantic field trip end 1993 and in 1994 to Australia, New Zealand and other places east. We would like to contact homeschoolers in these countries. We would like to get to know lots of local people in Australia who can show us what is interesting around this area. We are my husband Duke, son Rob - eighteen, daughters Rebecca 15 and Tiffany 10 years and mother Sandy. It will be a low budget trip with us camping and trying to travel as cheaply as possible. If anyone would be interested in putting us up for a few days, we would be willing to work or pay something. We also thought if we could arrange to buy a car instead of renting one we could save some money. Help in that area would be appreciated. Our daughter Rebecca was one of the authors of the book **Real Lives: Eleven teenagers who don't go to school** edited by Grace Llewellyn . Our address for any contact is 223 S Rd 300 E Danville IN 46122 USA

Public facilities available to homeschoolers

Lynda Hatfield Quirindi
While we were on correspondence we learnt of an allowance we were eligible for - the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme. When we returned to homeschooling we decided to apply with our registration certificates attached. We had no trouble and have received it for the last two years. Our criteria is that we are at least 4.5 km from transport and at least 16km from the nearest school. Our allowance is $10.00 per week per child for primary and $20.00 per week per child for secondary. Application forms can be obtained from all country CES offices. It is a wonderful no strings attached allowance for us at present considering the drought, etc. This may help if you don't already know about it.

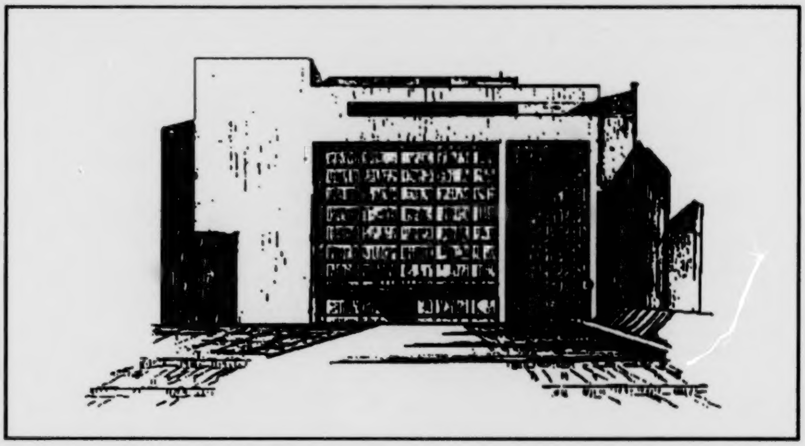
Homeschoolers and School Dental Facilities

Sue Warner Greenmount WA
It has come to my attention that homeschoolers, in this state at least, are entitled to use the school dental facilities. These are located on school premises within each district.

Queensland Legislative Change

Ben Mettes Queensland
There seems to be some confusion that some people want to keep you out of the discussion regarding Queensland's legislation. These people are very destructive. I have always enjoyed your efforts for the cause of homeschooling and even if we do not agree on all points, I think that it is a good thing that there are different opinions. If you need any support to get more involved in the Patris Bon case, you hereby have mine. I think we are very much in need of someone with your background. I think the only fear of some people is that you will start to dominate the debate, which - I think - is more due to their own inertia than to any of your intentions.

(**Jo-Anne's Note**: Thanks Ben for the vote of confidence, very much appreciated ! Many of you will be aware that the law in Queensland regarding homeschooling is governed by the unreasonable "guideline 4," that requires that homeschoolers either use ACE, be qualified teachers, employ part-time a qualified teacher or purchase and use the Qld Distance education programme that costs around $1000 per year. None of these requirements is in existence in any other state or territory. In 1990, I started a personal campaign to attempt to change this as a result of anticipating a move to Qld ourselves and due to a number of families ringing me about the issue. While I consulted with Bob Osmak and Dr Barry Harker on these issues, some people have taken great exception to my getting involved, notably Carolyn Gibbs - which is of course quite reasonable. However I wish to state categorically that beyond any help asked for, I do not wish to "get involved" in Queensland and have been totally "disinvolved" for a long time now. I see homeschooling as a sharing of ideas and experiences and thought I could be of some help - the ugly paybacks for this stupid thought are still coming some 2 years later. As some found my involvement offensive I was more than happy to step back. I do not want to make homeschooling in Qld, or anywhere else, look like it does in NSW. Experience shows that this would be impossible anyway. States that can't agree to join a national electricity grid, standardise health regulations, revenue raising and other taxes or line up their railway guages are extremely unlikely to copy each others' homeschooling legislation. My aim was to address what I saw as unfairness and Queensland being out of step, not to introduce any model as the ideal one. I know that this is not believed by some but I need to say that I have neither the time, energy or will to be involved in anything to do with Queensland legislation changes other than to say I wish all Queensland homeschoolers well for a speedy and successful addressing of the issues and that I would be very happy to print any results or submissions that happen as part of the process of change.)



John Horn Walpole WA
I have been reading all night through your homeschoolers material. Great to see that my family is not alone in looking for better educational options. Through your writing you are giving great encouragement indeed. Thank you! Whith your talent for educating, don't you think that you should be a school teacher in a public school? (Just a joke). I am enclosing a ten dollar bill to buy some stamps to assist you in spreading your good news.

Looking forward to receiving your next journals.

Kim Galvin Berridale, NSW

Thank you for your patient answers to my many questions. I feel reassured after talking to you (I was starting to imagine the Education Department as a large and drooling ogre!). At this stage it looks as if we will be registering our eldest as a homeschooler at the end of the year. (She doesn't have to start until 1994, so I have allowed plenty of time to investigate everything.)

Katherine Houk New York

Thank you for your newsletter - we enjoyed seeing ALLPIE's reviews in your newsletter - in exchange we have printed your article on pre-schoolers in the New York newsletter. Feel free to reprint from ALLPIE's newsletters- we only ask that you credit the articles and include ALLPIE's address. - PO Box 59, East Chatham, NY, 12060-0059, USA.

Great Books

Teresa Stevenson Jimboomba, QLD

Thanks for sending the latest order of books. ***"Hard Times In Paradise"*** really highlighted the value of families working together. I then read Nancy Wallace's ***"Child's Work"*** which happened to be a good sequel since it highlights that the best thing for children is to include them in our work (which is all the things we feel are meaningful to us) on a level that they can manage. I'm half way through John Holt's book ***"Never Too Late"*** which is inspiring to say the least. I did enjoy the day I spent at the conference very much. Actually, I feel one of the most valuable experiences of the day was hearing everybody else's "reasons why" and their experiences in your segment of the programme.

Kim Preston Warranwood, VIC

I'm bringing my family to live in the Blue Mountains and hope to find a place to rent somewhere between/around Katoomba - Lawson. I'll try and get up their on my own around 10th June to have a look around, but anyway we all arrive about 10th July. (Claire 8 and Peter 7) and are looking forward to meeting homeschoolers in the Blue Mountains.

Trish King Charlestown NSW

I am very interested in homeschooling my children. We have not used Preschools. We currently have a (NSW) Year 3 and Year 1 as well as a 4 year old who is ready for school and will begin next year.

Besides having ridden the 'educational conveyor belt' myself, and having done quite well, I have been a governess (with Correspondence School Lessons and School of the Air) at Bourke and Longreach.

I am concerned about the current system's failure to broaden knowledge or to teach and foster a love of learning. It seems to narrow minds to the point where we are all specialists without a general knowledge of how the whole social system works. It is no longer broadening the mind, but a means to getting a job. I'm planning not to get too carried away by it all, but would love some info. about homeschooling.

University and College Libraries are great resources

Ros Lazar Bathurst NSW

Found an absolutely A1, top value resource yesterday, the Charles Sturt University Library. Probably everyone else is aware of this. The library will admit community members for a fee of $50.00 per year, however if you are not a teacher or nurse you have to be referred, so its a very individual criteria as to whether you can become a member. Believe it or not I couldn't be admitted as a nurse because although I'm registered, Im not currently employed. I was admitted as a home school teacher! The librarian answering our application said he had no problem with our situation so long as I was registered with the Board of Studies (Each library may have different rules).

In our library there are thousands of dollars worth of primary school (& H S) resources, cassettes, strip films, reading cards, science aids, scales, trundle wheels, globes and so the list goes on. I felt it well worth the $50.00. Also of course the immense amount of material for the uni students (great educational reading). Even if people don't want to join its a great afternoon's pottering around using their facilities. Obviously they don't want noisy toddlers, but didn't mind my children at all.

Two places we've visited this term that are really worth visiting for a combination of education, entertainment and interest. **Lightning Ridge** - Home of the Black Opal. Very enlightening as far as opals go. Also a wild life refuge, house built out of bottles, bush museum with every piece of machinery you could imagine.

Coonabarabran - the Warrumbungle's very beautiful bushwalks, interesting geology and rock formation, Siding Springs observatory, hands on exhibition on the stars and other galaxies. Crystal and Gem museum. Miniland - a bit touristy but fun, (and had a small interesting museum also). An astronomer can come out to where you are staying for $5.00 a head and talk about astronomy - very interesting. For those who are 5 star Moteliers and want a taste of something different we stayed in a mud brick home on a farm called TIBUC. No hot water nor electricity but beautiful, private and fun. Other huts have varying degrees of comfort ranging to electricity and running hot water. Contact no. for TIBUC - Tony Marx (068) 321 740.

Feedback please

[Jo-Anne's note : I would like to generate replies to people like Gwenda through the AHJ . I have very little time to reply to all the letters that I get that need these sorts of issues addressed, so if you would like to reply to Gwenda, I will happily pass on your letter and if you would like your reply to be printed in the journal as well, please mark your envelope for my attention - thank you.].

Gwenda Cannane Wingham

We were visited by Don Haddon in December, and finally received our registration certificate the week before last. It is only for 6 months as my program wasn't adequate. I'm still a little unsure about what is expected and would appreciate you helping me by recommending suitable information. I'll gladly accept any guidance you can offer as I would very much like to help my son Tim.

Tim is nine and a half now and has been on a handicapped children's allowance since he was three. The medical professionals involved seem to think that his disabilities, though not severe, will continue into his adult life. He has some brain abnormalities which affect his comprehension, sequencing, moods, attention span, etc. He is also epileptic and has fine and gross motor problems. With medication, in addition to watching what he does and ingests, we can keep him relatively stable. The stress of school has been causing severe migraines and he has missed a lot of school either through illness or because he was so traumatised by school we were unable to get him to go there.

I imagine Tim's story is quite typical of the education system today. Although my eldest two sons both successfully completed their HSC's, Tim is not only failing to learn and develop properly, he has also developed terribly negative attitudes towards the whole learning process. He has either failed or been ridiculed so often that he no longer wants to try. I think he knows just about every trick in the book to get out of work or to disguise the fact that he cannot do the work. His teachers have not been able to get much work out of him at all. Each report has been worse and we know that he is getting further and further behind other children of his age.

Prior to taking Tim out of school, we noticed that his health, behaviour, attitudes and abilities all improved noticeably on weekends and during school holidays. The longer he was away from school, the more marked was the improvement. Through much trial and error we have proven to ourselves that Tim can learn relatively well, given the right circumstances.

Since we have finally taken Tim out of school, the changes in him have been obvious. His health, happiness, behaviour, confidence, ability and desire to learn have all shown marked improvement. However, the damage done during the past three years due to his inability to cope at school, is still obvious. He seems to feel afraid, overwhelmed by anything he cannot grasp straight away. He retreats rapidly, saying that he can not do it or refusing to even try. If we force the issue, the best we can get is that he will scribble anything that comes to his mind to get the situation over and done with. I don't believe this method has any positive effect. It didn't work at school and I cannot see it working here.

By making activities less stressful and lowering Tim's fear of failure, I have been able to get him to do a wide range of activities but, as soon as the situation looks too hard in his eyes, he reverts back to the way he has learned to react at school. I would like to continue with the advice I've been using from "Overcoming Learning Difficulties", by Barbara Pheloung and Jill King, as part of Tim's program if that is possible. I have tried to evaluate what Tim can actually cope with in the curriculum subjects and I have been giving him work at those levels which, although very basic, at least he is doing. Hopefully, he will progress to harder work as his confidence improves and as his fears diminish.

I'm really quite concerned as to how to provide the Board of Studies with programs and records that they will consider adequate yet, which won't draw a negative response from Tim. Neither Tim nor I cope well with stressful situations so, for everyone's sake, I would like to keep the situation with the least amount of stress possible. Whatever advice you can give me will be welcomed. Thank you for your time and diligent efforts to help children have a better and happier learning experience.

Lenore Stiggants Kyancutta SA

I really appreciate the interesting and inspiring articles in your magazine. Could you ask your readers if anyone knows where I could buy, hire or borrow videos on the following topics: calligraphy, folk dancing, foreign countries, cursive/script writing and sign language. Also, are there any readers using KONOS curriculum?

Teresa Stevenson Jimboomba, QLD

I'm writing, Jo-Anne, to trouble you for some help. How does one write a programme for home education that is honest but at the same time realistically caters for natural learning? and doesn't create stress in the parent's mind in trying to cover what is outlined in the programme? Does anyone know of anyone homeschooling a disabled child? A friend has a daughter with cerebral palsy and is autistic. She goes to a special school which is rigid in its attitude, e.g. they don't like her to be taken to an Independent School to interact with "normal" children (which she enjoys so much). She too would like to know more.

Ros Lazar Bathurst NSW

Dare I suggest an idea I thought of while reading the Double Helix magazine? Do you think there would be much interest in organising a Science for Kids by Kids Expo? My idea was to have it in a hall and have the kids set up experiments etc for other kids. My children love to do easy, simple experiments eg. holes in plastic bottle full with water and shows the effect of pressure - that sort of idea. It would encompass most ages depending on ability, like the Double Helix travelling science expos'. What do you think? (**Jo-Anne's Note**: If you are interested in helping Ros put together a Science Day contact her on 063 334 773)

Homeschooling the best kept secret

Julia Boxx

I often think that home schooling is one of the best kept secrets around. So often when I mention our children are homeschoolers, I get asked the same old questions over and over. Questions like "What's that?", "Is that legal?", "But how do you keep them out of school?, "Oh, you mean Correspondence", "How'd you find out about it?", "How do you go about getting into it", "Who makes sure you're doing the right stuff academically?", "How do you get all the books and the syllabus and tests you're supposed to use?", "Isn't it awfully expensive to set up your own school?", "Do you have to pay teachers to check on things at set times?", "Did you have to build a school room onto the house?", "Gee, I didn't know you were a certified teacher." (I'm not).

The list goes on and on. What is disturbing about many of these questions is that they show the speaker has no idea homeschooling is a legitimate option of schooling, what it really is or even that it exists. I find, generally, that people are not so much opposed to homeschooling as they are unaware of it. While we who homeschool are busy educating our children, participating in homeschooling support groups, workshops, and shared activities and dealing with issues and legislation relevant to us at the state and national level through our writing, reading, discussion and lobbying, the general public, it seems, remains largely uninformed about homeschooling.

One example comes to mind which demonstrates this. An acquaintance of mine has recently begun homeschooling her son, as she was not particularly happy with the school he would attend. I had talked with this mother on a number of occasions about our children being homeschooled. Seeing her recently, I mentioned wondering why more parents didn't homeschool their children. Her comment was, "Well, until I talked to you I didn't know anything about homeschooling - didn't even know there was such a thing. The school didn't mention it." That's the problem. Unless someone "mentions it", homeschooling is often not even known about as an option. And I doubt seriously that any school teaching staff or administration will be outlining homeschooling as an option to families, even if (or in some cases, especially if) the families are not satisfied with the school.

I know homeschooling is addressed in the Education Reform Act 1990, the TV and radio stations do regular interviews about homeschooling and of course there are some newspaper articles about homeschooling . But it is hardly enough ! Generally the public remains largely in the dark about homeschooling and needs to be constantly made aware of homeschooling if it is to become viewed as just as commonplace and an acceptable way to educate children as any other.

What is needed is a constant, ongoing "educational" campaign about homeschooling within our own individual communities, a campaign that goes on and on year round until the message gets through to the general public. I recently attended a workshop on homeschooling where one point in particular stuck in my mind. The speaker said, "You need to inform the public about homeschooling! I have educated about 400 people this year about homeschooling. If each of you do the same, then we will really get somewhere as a group!" I couldn't agree more. A one-off newspaper story or radio interview or TV appearance or chat with a few friends over coffee isn't enough!

Informing the community

I've thought of 18 ways to inform the public in each of our own local communities about homeschooling as a desirable option. There are lots more ways I'm sure, and even these 18 are not all my own, some having been suggested by other authors. These ideas provide a way to spread the message and keep it in the public's mind. Starting at the local level spreads things faster than at any other level, as it lends a grassroots "realness" to the issue.

1. Write or visit your local library with a list of books and journals/newsletters about homeschooling which it might purchase. If your own funds permit, you might donate a copy of one or several books or an annual subscription to the Australian Homeschool Journal to get the ball rolling. Make sure to give the library a copy of a current catalogue of Homeschooling literature.

2. Contact your own local radio and TV stations for an interview on homeschooling. People often pay more attention to local items on their local station than to those about national and world events. The interview may even be played more than once on local news stations!

3. Contact your local newspaper for an interview and photos. The community knows you as a person, and likes to read about local people and their affairs and issues.

4. Stop in to chat with your local newsagent and book store proprietors about stocking magazines and books on homeschooling. They stock every other kind of literature, so why not information on homeschooling? Be sure to give them a current catalogue too.

5. Talk with your council, local civic and social organisations and venue resources about giving a workshop or guest lecture on homeschooling. This could be a one-hour, half-day, full-day or even two-day event, depending on the interest level and time available. Make sure participants go away with handouts full of details on names, addresses and phone numbers of contact sources and further reading sources for follow-up.

6. Have a coffee- or cocktail-hour or a brunch, picnic or dinner party with several friends to discuss homeschooling. Ideally you can arrange something to pull fathers in too! How many times have you spoken informally with only one or two "unaware" friends about homeschooling while shopping or having coffee, only to wish afterwards that you didn't have to repeat it all the next time with another friend?

7. Encourage your children to discuss their homeschooling with their friends and their friends' families. We have found that our children are often our best way of informing other people about what homeschooling is, how it works and of its benefits.

8. Set up attractive professional looking display posters and stalls about homeschooling at your community markets, events and local shows. Be sure to offer handouts about reading lists, contact sources and general information about homeschooling.

9. Get a listing in your community's annual publication for government, professional, social and business groups. Be sure to include a contact name, address and phone number or the same for a support group you may have already formed.

10. When approaching local businesses for products and services, get into the habit of introducing yourself as "a homeschooling family", or "a homeschooling mother-father-student". This approach gives credence to your request and promotes home schooling as a legitimate option in the public's eye, entitled to any discounts, rebates or special offers available to other educational organisations.

11. Have a chat with your local doctor or medical centre professionals, the local community health services personnel, hospital staff, allied-health, para-medical and alternative health professionals in your community about homeschooling as a resource for educational options. You'd be surprised how many of them are seeking more and worthwhile educational sources for their patients' families.

12. Contact your local play-groups, day care centres, preschools and home-care givers organisations and individuals with information about homeschooling. Perhaps you think, "Well, if their children are already in those sorts of places at that age, the parents aren't going to be at all interested in homeschooling." Not necessarily. Many parents have their children in those "sorts of places" precisely because they feel they have nothing to offer their own children themselves that matches such programs or that the only things of benefit to their children are things provided by such professional groups or persons. Being given access to information about homeschooling may provide the impetus and confidence these parents need to begin seeing themselves as worthwhile and significant people in their own children's development and learning.

13. If your finances permit, have a small pamphlet or brochure about homeschooling, with local contact sources noted, printed up for free distribution in your community centres - places like the public library, hospital, community health and well-baby centres, council day-care centre, shire council offices, supermarket, newsagency, CWA centre, Nursing Mothers' centre, church offices, after-school centres, arts and crafts cooperatives, Police-Citizens' Youth centre, public resting rooms, Neighbourhood Watch centre, and any others you think of as appropriate.

14. Invite friends around during conventional "school hours" - granted your homeschooling program may not fall within the regular "9:00 - 3:30" scene, but then again it may. Either way, your friends will learn a lot just from seeing what happens with a home schooling approach (no matter what that approach may be!) and gain valuable insights into what homeschooling is about, how conventional or diverse and unique it can be and how it can specifically meet each child's individual needs.

15. Advertise that you are happy to be a local contact by writing to your local shire council members, members for State and Federal parliament and opposition members, your home schooling unit, Board of Studies officers and liaison officer, your local school's Cluster Director, State and Federal Ministers for School Education and Shadow Ministers and local school administrators informing them that your name and phone number may be used as a local contact for persons inquiring about homeschooling.

16. Actively promote homeschooling in your community by wearing a sloppy joe or jumper with a homeschooling logo or displaying a "homeschoolers" car bumper sticker. Add "Homeschoolers!" or "A Homeschooling Family" to your return address sticker labels, personal stationery, telephone answering machine or faxed messages or have your shopping carry-all or beach towels imprinted with a "Homeschoolers!" logo. Think of other ways you can more generally spread the message of homeschooling within your community.

17. Offer to give a talk about homeschooling to your family's church, social, civic or other community groups you are involved in. These organisations are always eagerly looking for guest speakers on any sorts of topics, and they welcome offers from their members.

18. Continue to politely and thoroughly answer the endless questions from family, friends and acquaintances about homeschooling that you have always answered, and tell yourself that you won't have to do this forever. But until then ....

Perhaps you're saying, "Yes, that's fine for someone with not a whole lot to do, but I'd never find the time to do all that!" Well, no one said it all had to be done in a day or week or a month! One of the best ways to make a lasting impression in people's minds is to provide small amounts of information over longer periods of time. Try doing one item each month over 18 consecutive months. That's a lot of information being spread around your community about homeschooling constantly over a year and a half, a little bit at a time. It might even sink in more effectively in these smaller doses over a longer period of time that everything being thrown at people all at once with little or no follow-up. Too, this approach is more likely to reach a larger number of people than a one-off blitz. Not everyone is tuned into that TV or radio program that particular night, nor does everyone read that issue of the paper, nor was everyone able to attend that talk you gave on that evening nor did everyone see your car bumper sticker when you parked in the supermarket car park and so on and so on.

Getting the Message

You can be assured that even though you may be alone locally in the first year of your efforts, you won't be after that. There will be other families who got the message, decided to follow up on it and are homeschooling by then as well. They too can help spread the message. Those of you who already have a local support group can share this load over the year and a half or longer if you have even more ideas.

With each of us putting this kind of effort into it within our own local communities, the day will come and not in the too distant future when homeschooling is as familiar and acceptable to the general public as any other educational choice. That matters and that is important! So get started, keep at it and good luck! Happy homeschooling !

Dr Julia Boxx lives with her husband Jess and their thirteen children in the Mudgee region of NSW.

Attention NSW Homeschoolers re Access to Q Stores (NSW Government Stores)

When homeschoolers first gained access to Q Stores in 1992 we were not able to use the NSW Supply Services. This has recently changed and all homeschoolers will soon be informed about this change most likely by letter from B. Campbell the Executive Director of Supply. This means that a homeschooler can purchase educationally approved materials relating directly to your role as a homeschooler (At the discretion of the supplier) from NSW Supply Services. This would include items such as printers, computers etc. Please note that this does not mean that these items will be cheaper from these sources as Q Stores have asked me to remind you (and it is written on the form you will receive) that access to Q Stores and NSW Supply Services does not provide nor imply Sales Tax Exemption.

Going to Home Education Camps

Joanne Brugmans

It all started about three and a half years ago. We travelled north of Sydney to our first camp at Yarrahapinni . Since then we have been to many more and our total is now 14 (which does not count smaller events with lower numbers). Back in the early days we all seemed to need to talk about home education in large groups. We were always impressed by wonderful things the children did even though we did not then (compared to now) spend great amounts of energy in those areas. These days the adults seem to have worked out what home education really is and are getting on with it.

There is always the opportunity for large group discussions though they are usually few and far between. It is as if we (the parents) have moved finally from the school approach to learning about home education to the natural learning one. Small informal discussions take place the whole camp long, while craft activities, nature walks, meal preparations and concerts are in action.

Our family finds great value in attending camps. People from all walks of life come with varied philosophies about children and learning. Everyone is always welcome and accepted. We share what we have to share and enjoy each others company. At the last "Victorian" camp there was sailing, recorder ensembles, drama workshops, 'juggling balls' making and juggling, small box making (origami type- out of used greeting cards), a 50's dance night, co-operative games, a concert, hair braiding and binding, a night hike (the camp had a colony of koalas), kite making, a communal meal (children could help with preparations), day outings to archery and mini golf, a boat trip, free time, self defence for women, a womansong workshop, stick animal workshop, poetry workshops, late night discussions (small groups), clay sculpture, parachute games, a children's circus, bike riding and canoeing. The costs were moderate, the facilities great and the company superb.

Most families have a natural learning style and everyone's approach is unique. We always have our own sleeping space - tent or cabin and usually there are shared facilities for everything else. (Some camps have ensuite accommodation available). Shared mealtimes are the highlights as we go about parenting and providing alongside others. Children can see other families doing the things they do. It is really quite inspiring to share a living experience with other home educating families.

At first the children are loud and full of energy, excited as they explore their new environment. The adults are busy settling in and catching up with old friends. By the second day a calm, enthusiastic, co-operative atmosphere has arrived and plans are made. As the days go on everyone notices the lift the camp is giving us all, families share their energy and resources. The children interact well with other children and adults and relationships blossom. Ups and downs occur of course. We slowly get to know some of those faces we've only been smiling at in the kitchen. Clean up rosters and commitments we've made keep us sane. There could be a birthday to celebrate or a drama to deal with , the season, the camp environment and the people make each camp what it is.

Every camp has a special something that the children designed themselves. At this years Raymond Island camp it was a spot light chasing game on the oval at night! At last years Shelly it was "British Bulldogs" pole games, at the second Yarrahapinni it was wool loop designs (cats cradle, etc). At Howqua it was paper aeroplanes and at Cape Bridgewater it was the spider web and spider games.

I'm always most impressed by the older children at these camps - they join in and have a wow of a time. Their level of talent and expertise in many areas is always amazing. Seeing these children gives me hope for this whole thing working out just the way I've always dreamed and believed it would. After every camp there is a period up to one week long where I feel our family is floating on cloud nine, where I have every ounce of patience I need or want. The children too show with their co-operation and love that the camp was something special. The most recent camp at Emu Park (June 1993) organised by Kathy Boles, was the absolute best one yet. Twenty families had a wonderful time together and we made brilliant pentagon lanterns for our walk along the beach.

So why not do yourself a favour - experience a camp - you'll never be the same again.

(Jo-Anne's note: See the back page of the Australian Homeschool Journal for details of the camp the Brugmans family is organising at Yarrahappini in September)

Joanne Brugmans lives in Sphinx Rock NSW (near Nimbin) with husband Jaap and children Kylie(10), Stephen (7) and Nicole (5). She facilitates support group meetings in her own area, most recently at the end of May for 30 families and the Brugmans family are undoubtedly homeschool "campers extraordinaire"

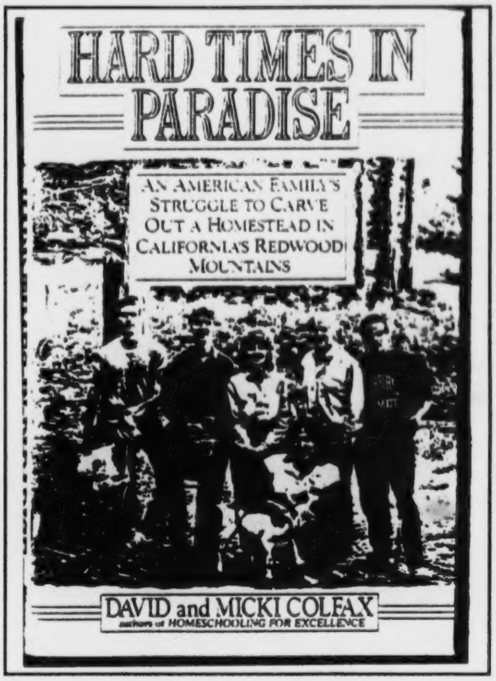
Book Review

Hard Times in Paradise

by David and Micki Colfax

(Jo-Anne's note: Hard Times in Paradise is one of the most interesting and inspiring books I've read about homeschooling in a long time is Hard Times in Paradise. Both Gregory (13) & Rebecca (11) also loved it. This is a great family who educate their children, in an unstructured way, under very hard circumstances to great academic success. This is just a small excerpt from the chapter 'Backwoods Scholar'. I highly recommend this book). [Micki is the mother, Grant the eldest of four sons, Drew the second eldest and David is the father].

From Grant's diary, March 1982: Decided to get my act together and started to study to go to college. I've been doing schoolwork nearly full time since Christmas. In the last four months I've done 420 pages of math, 800 pages of English, 200 pages of chemistry and have almost finished second year Spanish. Major events since last fall: County fair: Kupie won Grand Champion, and this ended the show season. What a way to go! Stock sales are up and still climbing. I have sold almost all my kids in utero. People from Washington, Nevada, Indiana, Michigan, and California have reserved kids. I wrote a short story that the entire family gave rave reviews. I've decided to become a writer despite the odds of getting a short story published running about 25,000 to 1. Have added "Rebecca" and "David Copperfield" to my top ten best movies of all time list.


HARD TIMES IN PARADISE
AN AMERICAN FAMILY'S STRUGGLE TO CARVE OUT A HOMESTEAD IN CALIFORNIA'S REDWOOD MOUNTAINS
DAVID and MICKI COLFAX
authors of HOMESCHOOLING FOR EXCELLENCE

We parked the pickup in front of the Baltimore County Museum, just around the corner from the Johns Hopkins University Admissions Office. Drew, Reed, and Garth were in the camper shell behind us, while Grant did his interview. "How'd it go?" Micki asked as Grant reappeared and climbed in beside us. "Terrible," he snarled. "Just terrible." "What happened?" "That interviewer said I'd have to be considered along with the *foreign* applicants since my schooling was so different. I knew this was a waste of time. I'll never get into any of these colleges." "You might not," said Micki. "We talked about that" "Not that I'd be considered a *foreign* student." "What was the interviewer like?" David asked as we pulled out into the boulevard that bordered the campus. "Well, when I told her my parents were visiting the museum, she said she'd never been there," fumed Grant. "Never been there even though it's right across the street!" "That says a lot about her," said David. "Yeah, but *she's* the one who makes the admissions decisions." "You wouldn't want to go to school here anyway," said Micki, unfolding a city map. "I didn't know Johns Hopkins was in such a bad area." "I'd go there if I could get in," Grant said petulantly. "You know I would."

"You have ten more interviews," David reminded him. "Don't make it miserable for us just because of a bad start." "We should have stayed at home," sulked Grant, slouching down in his seat. "Yeah, maybe we should have if this is the way you're going to react," said David. We were heading north to Pennsylvania. Grant had interviews scheduled at Swathmore and Haverford the next day. We had always assumed that the boys would one day leave the homestead, that there would come a time when they would want to strike out on their own, to explore and experience the world on their own terms. But when we came onto the land, those days seemed infinitely far in the future. It wasn't until Grant was sixteen that we began to think seriously about his - and the other boys' - off-the-land future. We didn't have any reason to worry about how well they might do in college. They'd read extensively - certainly to a greater extent than we ever had - and their interests were even more wide-ranging and arcane. Because they were self-directed and enjoyed learning - whether it was building a house or solving a math problem - we were confident that they would have no trouble managing whatever they might encounter in a college setting.

The real question was how we'd ever be able to pay for it. Room and board at a state school would run at least seven thousand dollars a year - about what we managed to bring in on a good year. We simply weren't generating enough money to pay even for the cheapest of college educations. "I'd go where the money is," Eric advised the summer before ...... "Grant's smart enough. He ought to apply to a school like Harvard or Yale, where they have about what we managed to bring in on a good year. We simply weren't generating enough money to pay even for the cheapest of college educations. "I'd go where the money is," Eric advised the summer before ...... "Grant's smart enough. He ought to apply to a school like Harvard or Yale, where they have all kinds of scholarship money." The problem, of course, was getting admitted to one of Eric's "rich schools". For one thing, Grant's credentials were not exactly conventional, and we had no way of knowing how admissions officers might regard a home-taught applicant. For another, Grant had never taken any kind of standardised test. We had never felt the need to test the boys ourselves, for we did not subscribe to the classroom-driven notions of "age specific" or "grade level" performance. To the extent that we had a theory of learning, it was simply that we tried to respect and build upon their individual differences - in social, emotional and intellectual development and in interests and abilities. Our job as parent-educators was to suggest options, to identify opportunities and to provide support and not to demand conformity and attempt to control the way most schools did. And in sharp contrast with the organisationally driven conventional wisdom of the professional educators, we believed that it was not important that they master any or all subjects at any particular age, in any particular time span, or in any particular sequence. And now Grant, untested and with that background, had to confront on of the most intimidating conventional and formidable of hurdles: the Educational Testing Service's Scholastic Aptitude Test - the SAT's - and Achievement Tests. "Well, here goes the rest of my life," he said only half-jokingly one January morning as he headed off to Fort Bragg High School to take his first test, the SAT's. "If I screw up today, it's all over." "I'm sure you'll do just fine," Micki assured him.......... Grant received his SAT scores a few days after he and Micki had returned from Los Angeles....... He'd done better than any of us could have ever hoped, with scores in the ninety-ninth percentile..........

One afternoon a few days later, an uncharacteristically subdued Grant sat in the living room compiling a list of colleges he thought he might be interested in attending. After an hour he drifted into the kitchen, where Micki was just taking some loaves out of the oven. "What do you think about my becoming a doctor?" he asked casually as he broke off a steaming crust. "That would be fine," Micki said. We'd always assumed that Grant would go into anthropology or become a veterinarian.........

"Here he comes," Micki said apprehensively as Grant emerged from one of Swathmore's hallmark grey stone buildings. .... Grant approached, a wide grin on his face. "What happened?" "I got the director of admissions," Grant announced. "He said to tell Johns Hopkins to go to hell." "What?" "He used to be in 4-H, and we really hit it off. He said that if Johns Hopkins can't deal with my background, just tell them to go to hell." "It sounds like it was a good interview, then," said David, greatly relieved. The trip up from Baltimore had not been a pleasant one. "Yeah," said Grant. "But of course he didn't say I'd be admitted."

We made our way up the coast as Grant interviewed at Haverford, Princeton, Yale, Brown, and Harvard, then turned west to Dartmouth, Amherst, and Williams. The interviews that had begun so poorly at Johns Hopkins had turned into something very different: Each of the scheduled fifteen-minute interviews lasted at least an hour or two, while the five of us wandered the campuses, taking in the local colour and checking out points of interest. The interviews had become performances, each of which Grant would rate in terms of previous ones: this one was better than the one at Brown, that one was worse than the one at Yale, he was too emphatic here, forgot to mention this or that there. "You must go on and on," Micki said with a sigh after an especially long interview at Yale. Grant laughed, exhilarated and suddenly self-conscious. "Yeah. Pretty much. I go right down the list - from not going to school to living without electricity to raising goats. They really get into it. I guess I come across as being pretty unusual." "I can't imagine why," said Micki.

........It was a busy summer and autumn: goat shows, the fairs, preparation of the goat sales list, the summer garden harvested and the winter garden planted, breedings to arrange. Grant took a math achievement test, did very well, and spent October writing and rewriting the personal essay that the college admissions officers told him was so important. He'd decided that he wanted to go to a large urban university - an environment as different as possible from the one in which he'd grown up - a decision that eliminated more than half the colleges at which he'd interviewed. Harvard cautioned him against applying in November for a December decision - the "early action" procedure - since his score on the English achievement test wouldn't be available in time for consideration, but Yale said they could make a decision without it. It wasn't a conventional application. In lieu of a transcript, we wrote a letter explaining his "unique educational background," described his "course work," and listed textbooks he'd used over the last four years. In place of the usual high school counsellor report, he submitted a half dozen letters of recommendation - from fellow dairy goat breeders, 4-H project leaders, the editor of the dairy goat publication for which he'd been writing since he was eleven, and co-workers at the new health centre at which he'd been doing volunteer work one day a week since deciding that he wanted to become a doctor. There were his current sales list, reprints of articles he'd done for the *Dairy Goat Journal, Goat Notes*, and the *Dairy Goat Guide*, and a long essay about his life on the ranch and his reasons for wanting to go east to a large university.

....."Well, thank you for calling me." He put down the telephone and turned solemnly to the five of us, who had gathered on the other side of the room. "I'm in!" he shouted, throwing his arms into the air. "I'm in. I made it!" ......Micki said.... "I just don't know how we'd have managed if you hadn't been admitted. You would have been unbearable." "I know," said Grant. "But you know what this means? Now I can apply to Harvard." "And it really won't matter," said Micki. "What do you mean it won't matter?" Grant said. "Of course it will." "Here we go again," muttered Drew.

Candle casting in wet sand by Ann Wilson

from *MAKING THINGS The Handbook of Creative Discovery*

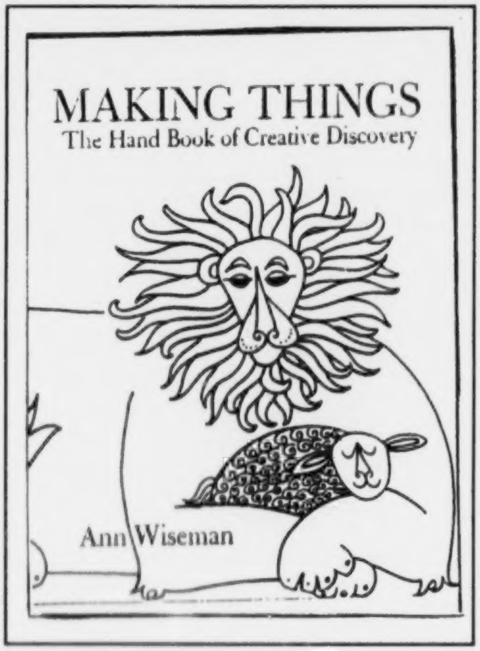
Available from The John Holt Bookstore P.O. Box 420 Kellyville 2153

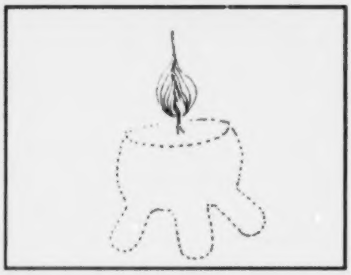
1. Fill a box with sand.
2. Add enough water to dampen the sand
3. Scoop out a hole, or screw your fist in the sand
4. Poke thumb and 2 fingers into hole, down far enough to make leg molds.
5. Melt paraffin in double boiler. Melt crayon bits for colour.
6. Pour melted wax into mold.
7. While wax is soft make wick hole with toothpick
8. Introduce wick into candle, pour tiny bit more warm wax to set wick.
9. When wax is cool remove candle from sand. Make different shapes.

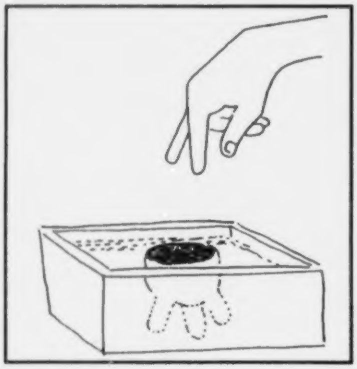
MASTER NOTES: The sand sticks to the outside of candle. If you want a wider sand area mix a can of sand and wax together and coat the hole with a thick wall of this mix. Then pour pure wax into centre burning area.

Wick can be introduced at pouring stage by tying section of wick to stick and resting it over the wax hole. Pour slowly so wick stands straight.

Add candle hardener for better, longer burning candles. 220gms stearic acid per 5kg block of paraffin.


MAKING THINGS
The Hand Book of Creative Discovery
Ann Wiseman





Making Cottage Cheese

whole milk vs skim milk by Vicki Cobb from

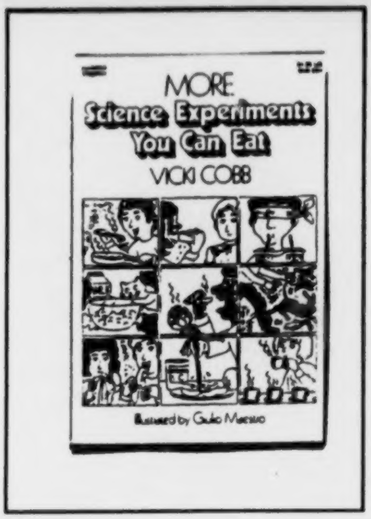
More Science Experiments you can Eat

Available from The John Holt Bookstore P.O. Box 420 Kellyville 2153

The basis of all cheese is milk solids, the proteins and fats in milk. Milk solids can be separated from the watery portion of milk in several ways. You can add an acid such as lemon juice or vinegar. You can add an enzyme (a protein that controls chemical reactions in living systems) such as ***rennet***, the milk-coagulating protein derived from the stomachs of calves. It's used to make Junket desserts. And, of course, you can use a lacto-bacilli culture. When milk is made into cheese, the milk protein is coagulated and then separated as "curds" from the watery portion of the milk, or "whey." Cottage cheese is one of the simplest fresh cheeses to prepare.

Cottage cheese is almost synonymous with the word "diet." It's a staple food for many people when they want to lose weight. That's because most commercial cottage cheese is made from skim milk, milk with the butterfat removed. In this experiment you make cottage cheese from skim milk and compare it with cottage cheese you make from whole milk. The question you'll be trying to answer is **"Does butterfat make a difference in the texture and taste of cottage cheese curds?"**

The procedures for this experiment and for the next one (making soft - or hard-ripened cheese) lend themselves to an almost unlimited series of other experi-


MORE
Science Experiments
You Can Eat
VICKI COBB
Illustrated by Giulio Maestro

ments in cheese making. (There are specialists called dairy microbiologists who study the making of cheese and other cultured milk products as a career.) The cottage cheese results of this experiment can serve as the raw material for the one that follows. If you intend to go on and make pressed and ripened cheese, read the instructions for *Hard-Ripened Cheese* and collect all your equipment for both experiments before you start making cottage cheese. **NOTE:** In any cheese-making experiment, there is a possibility that your mixture, instead of ripening, will spoil. This can happen if your equipment isn't perfectly clean or if the temperature is too high. If your cheese smells bad or looks spoiled, *do not eat it*.

MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

2.5 litres of skim milk
2.5 litres of whole milk
2 large glass or ceramic bowls or stainless steel pots (do not use aluminium or cast iron), cultured buttermilk, measuring spoons, plastic wrap, knife, a very large pot and a smaller one (stainless steel) that fits inside it - to be used as a double boiler, spoons for stirring, 2 small glasses, colander, cheesecloth, 2 small bowls, heavy cream or creme fraiche (optional)

PROCEDURE

Allow the cartons of milk to stand, unrefrigerated, for several hours until the milk is at room temperature. Pour the skim milk into one large bowl and the whole milk into the other. Add 3 tablespoons of buttermilk to each and stir well. Cover each bowl with plastic wrap and put the bowls in a warm place overnight.

The next day the milk will be "clabbered," or like a soft custard. (Using what you learned in the *Cultured Cream* experiment, can you explain what causes the milk to "clabber" ?) The milk is ready for the next step if the whey is starting to collect around the edges. If this isn't happening, it isn't "ripe" yet. Give it more time.

Make slices through the curds one inch apart. Repeat in the other direction to make a crisscross pattern, forming rough cubes.

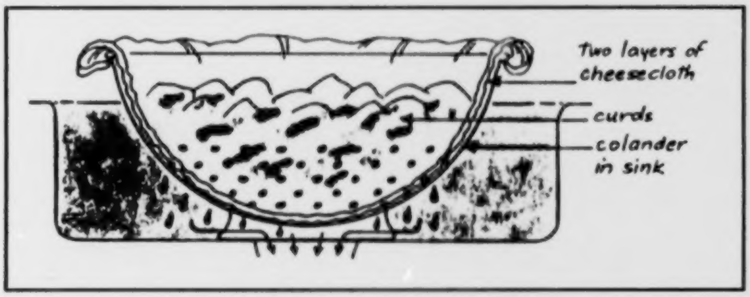
The next step is to further coagulate the curds and cause them to separate from the whey. This is done by very slow heating to about 38 degrees Centigrade (100 degrees F)- just warm to the touch. If you heat the curds too quickly or at too high a temperature, they will become tough. Put a bowl containing clabbered milk in a pot containing hot water. (If the bowl doesn't fit into the pot, or if it isn't heat-proof, gently pour the curds and whey into a stainless steel saucepan that does fit in the larger pot.)

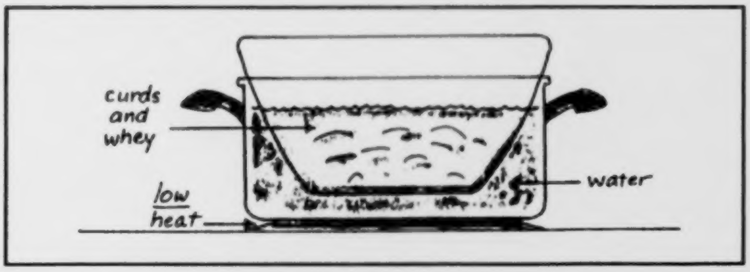
Heat over a very low flame, stirring occasionally. The heating process should take about 30 minutes. Heat until the milk is just warm to the touch.

Remove the curds and whey from the heat and let them cool for about 20 mins. Meanwhile, repeat the procedure with the second batch of clabbered milk. Skim off about 1/4 cup of whey from the first batch of cheese into a small glass. Set aside. Line a colander with two layers of cheesecloth. Pour the curds and whey into the cheesecloth and let drain. From time to time, lift up the cheesecloth and shake the curds to let pockets of trapped whey drain through. Bring the tops of the cheesecloth together, twist, and squeeze out the remaining whey. Put the drained curds into a small bowl. (If you wish, you can rinse the curds under cool water. We did not find this necessary.) Repeat the procedure as precisely as possible for the other batch of cheese.

OBSERVATIONS

Taste the whey samples from both batches. Are they different in appearance and taste? Taste the curds from both batches. Which are more tender? (one standard for judging the quality of cottage cheese is the tenderness of the curd.) Do you think butterfat plays a role in the making a more tender curd? Save the curds from the whole milk for the next experiment, it you wish. If not salt the curds and mix in heavy cream to taste (or creme fraiche from the last experiment.) Refrigerate the cheese until you are ready to eat it. Cottage cheese is perishable and should be eaten within two or three days.





Should home-schoolers receive government funding?

Homeschoolers hold many differing opinions on the idea that homeschoolers should be funded for the education with which they provide their children. Some people say that to accept government money is to accept greater regulation, others point out that it is extremely unjust to expect parents to pay taxes that educate everyone else's children while receiving no sharing of the "tax dollar" for the high quality education of their own children.

The reality is that while some homeschoolers will never wish to accept funding of any sort, funding in the short and long term will enable more parents to take up the option of homeschooling. It may be that under discrimination legislation it is impossible for the government to refuse funding to one part of the education system which is recognised under the law and registered as such. This case is presently being tested. Funding has not meant any more strict control of homeschooling in New Zealand, France or California. Furthermore it seems logical that those who happily concur with and fulfill the community ideal of the right of a child to a high quality education should not be discriminated against by not receiving funding. Following are some articles that present philosophical, practical and esoteric views on this topic for your consideration.

A Case For the Funding of Home Education

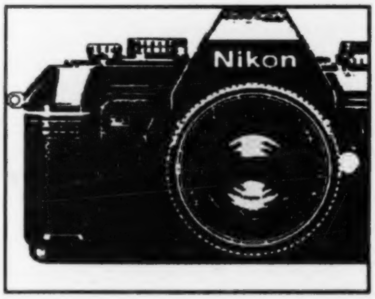
Julia Boxx

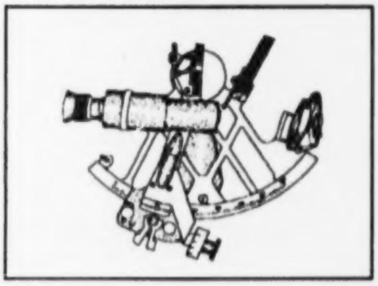
Whether or not educational funds ought to be made available for homeschooling continues to be a matter of contention or differing philosophical views. This appears to me, however, not to be the central issue, for several reasons.

First, government funds are used to provide and regulate education. Opposition to this for whatever reasons - moral, social or ethical - should be an issue separate to that of whether some persons ought to be denied funds available to others in the same group. If one opposes funding, it can be refused by him. No one is, or ever will be, required to accept taxpayer funds made available to him for any purposes.

Second, to assume that making funds available to homeschoolers will enable the government to further regulate those families or to increase requirements and tighten standards required of them, is unwarranted in terms of what is currently the case in other similar situations. There are already numerous cases which indicate this would not occur. Consider, for example, the student eligible for Austudy assistance. He is not required to accept these funds, nor is he required, if he does accept them, to meet any additional or more stringent requirements educationally or in any other way. The same is true of the non-government schools and students compared to those of the government schools, schools and students receiving special government grants, or students receiving "aid to isolated children" funding in the form of allowances for correspondence lessons, boarding school fee assistance or second home allowance. To oppose funding for homeschoolers on the assumption it would result in higher or more standards and/or requirements being set for homeschoolers (further "regulation") seems at best unwarranted and unsupported and at worst illogical and rather paranoid.

To "hone this point" further still, funding for even the baseline amount allocated as "amount per student per year" to all government and non-government schools is not related to requirements and standards set educationally, but rather to number of students. For example, a school receives XX dollars per year irrespective or whether it offers only one or several courses in a given area, its students attend classes regularly or not, they achieve the school's academic pass marks in courses or not, or whether or not the school has sufficient sports grounds for its student population.





These examples, only a few of many which could be sighted, may relate to the eligibility for or awarding of credentials, but not to the amount of money allocated by the state per student per year from the education budget.

Too, that homeschoolers already do as well, and in most cases better, educationally than students in other school options is clearly supportable and widely known. Even the government would not raise this issue as one of concern in something of an "assurance of value for money" argument.

Third, and conversely to points one and two, the opposing of or refusal to accept available funds by a student, his family or a school for whatever reasons does not free that student, family or school from, or even reduce for them, the responsibility of fulfilling the minimum educational standards and requirements set by the state. Homeschoolers, whether registered or not, like all other school programs and students, are already required to meet these minimum educational standards and requirements. This responsibility has not been waived or lessened in any way for home schoolers, nor will it be, because they are not funded. As noted, regulations imposed beyond this minimum requirement related to eligibility for or awarding of particular credential-not to funding.

In light of the above points, I offer here a number of rationales for why homeschooling should be funded.

1. The law (the NSW Education Reform Act 1990) requires that every child aged 6 to 15 years must be formally educated. It is impossible to do this without expenditure of money.

2. The state of NSW endorses three legal options of formal schooling - attendance at a government school, attendance at a non-government school and homeschooling. However, the state funds only the first two. By failing to fund the third, the state is using taxpayer funds disproportionately amongst students and in something of a "reverse order to needs or costs incurred." It is fully funding those who have no direct costs educationally (students in government schools) and near fully funding those who directly incur only partial costs (students in non-government schools) while withholding all funds from those who directly incur all costs themselves (homeschoolers). This is discriminatory and might even be viewed as misappropriation of funds.

3. The law (the Education Reform Act 1990) states that the education of the child is primarily the responsibility of the parent. But by not funding the homeschooling option, the state makes it financially prohibitive for many families to fully assume a responsibility set by the state of them. It could thus be said that the state makes it impossible for some families to abide as fully within the law as they might otherwise be able to do.

> *"Why are homeschoolers not funded and can the government justify this?"*

4. Most homeschooling families, like most other families, pay tax, part of which is used to educate Australia's children. Thus, the homeschooling family pays twice to educate its family - once through taxes which do not go to educating its child and then again by directly incurring all costs involved in choosing the option of homeschooling.

Let me make another point for those beginning to raise opposition here. This is not justified on the ground that everyone pays tax dollars for education, even those people with no children being educated. Society as a whole benefits by its children being educated, but the vast majority of those with children pay no more for this benefit than those without children and certainly not twice as much. We do not operate on a "user-pays" system with regard to education, as it is required by law - EXCEPT in the case where homeschooling is chosen. Nor is this point the same as "Well, we pay road tolls on roads built with taxpayer money." No one is required by law to use the roads. Use of the roads, any roads, is optional. Educating children is not. Finally, that some oppose government funding of or regulation of the child's schooling does not exempt them from paying tax which is then used for these purposes. For such opposition to be valid, it needs to be applied to all schooling options, not solely to homeschooling.

5. Government expenditure on government schools in 1990-91, when expressed in "per student" terms was estimated to be $4,305 per student - $3,712 per student in primary and $5,206 per student in secondary (Reference: National Report on Schooling in Australia - 1991, published by Australian Education Council and Curriculum Corporation, 1992, p.15.). No funds were allocated for homeschooling students. This anomaly may be viewed either of two ways. The education budget would have to be larger to support funding of homeschoolers (and thereby to fund all students which it proports to already do) or the education budget is large enough, but is being parcelled out over only some students in larger amounts than it should be, at the expense of other students who get nothing.

In response to those raising points about these figures including "expenditure on provision of buildings and grounds, which homeschoolers don't have", etc. and it "costing money to regulate homeschooling", the former amounts to only $325 per student per year of the total figure per student (Reference: National Report on Schooling in Australia - 1991, published by Australian Education Council and Curriculum Corporation, 1992 p.35), and even those arguing most desperately against funding of homeschooling would not suggest it costs $4000 per student per year to regulate homeschooling!

That homeschoolers are certainly entitled to their portion of the government's tax dollar for education seems beyond dispute. Let's not waste time asking irrelevant or superfluous questions like "Should homeschoolers be funded or not?" and "Why should homeschoolers be funded and how can we convince the government of this?" Rather let's ask the real questions, "Why are homeschoolers not funded and can the government justify this?" I suggest we ask these questions immediately.

Government Allowances for Older Children

Frank & Valerie Marrett

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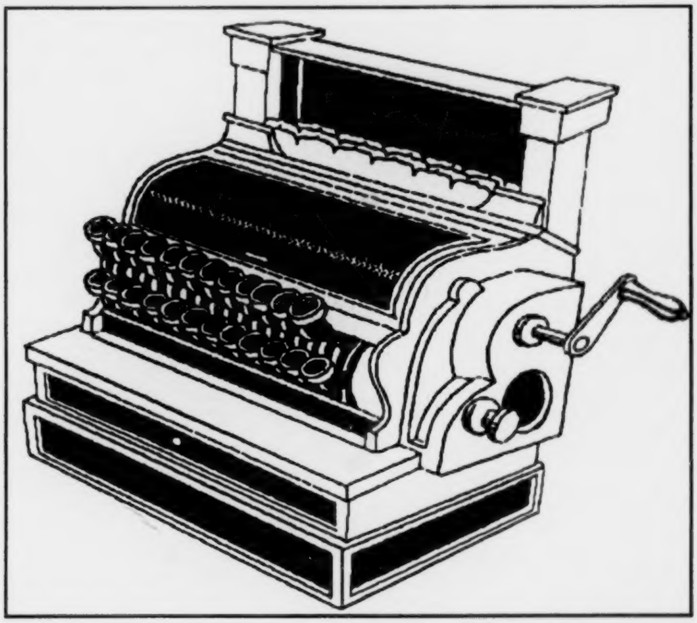
The family supplement and family allowance was originally paid to the family as a tax deduction. Each child was claimable and the education of the child could be claimed at the rate of about $250 per child. Child Endowment was paid at the rate of fifty cents per week after the first child. By the late 1970's it was clear that fifty cents per week was a ridiculous amount. Claiming that many husbands were not giving the money to their wives, the Government decided to increase the amount of Child Endowment and pay it directly to the mother. This was to be financed by withdrawing tax deductibility of children. Any family with children was eligible regardless of income.



A few years later, to allow for the rising cost of living, this was further increased. This time it was financed by a means test. All those on lower incomes were eligible for an extra supplement so children would not be disadvantaged.The cut off point now for Family Allowance is currently $50 000 per year. Eligibility is based on the joint income of husband and wife and the number of children they support. Family Supplement also depends on the joint income and number of dependent children. Children between thirteen and sixteen are eligible for higher allowance.

Families being paid Family Supplement are also eligible for a Health Card. The benefits of this may vary from state to state but in Victoria the Health Card entitles families to several concessions. For example, a winter concession on gas and electricity, concessions on water, bulk billing by the doctor, cheaper medicine ($2.50 instead of $13.00 per prescription), cheaper fares and entrance to places such as cinemas for the first person listed on the card. These concessions add up to a considerable amount of money, especially on bills.

Austudy was originally introduced as a scheme to keep children at school longer and thus keep the unemployment figures down. It was designed to be paid to the child only and a higher amount was to be paid if the child was not living at home. This was to be financed by taking the money from the mother and giving it to the child, who might or might not give it to the mother. Supposedly this was to allow the child the benefit of the money and to provide an incentive to remain at school. It is important to note that neither Family Allowance nor Family Supplement is subject to income tax, but Austudy is.

Once the child turns sixteen, if they are at an approved school, they would normally apply for Austudy. The average amount is about $60 a fortnight but again this varies depending on the parent's income. Should the child earn any income during the year, eg delivering papers, it must be added to this amount and declared for tax purposes. This can mean that with a small job a child can pay tax. The allowance can be paid into a parent's bank account but exactly who then is liable for tax is not quite clear.

Since most home-schoolers do not attend an "approved" school they are ineligible for this allowance. It is important to understand that it is not a case of legality. Once a child is sixteen he can leave school. They are then administered by a separate department and, as far as the bureaucrats are concerned, the child is not supported by the family. They only recognise parental support at the time that they assess eligibility for the scheme. This means that the child will not appear on the Health Card and will not be considered when this is being assessed, as a result of which a family can have a great many more expenses.

Until a child is sixteen the mother is automatically eligible for Family Allowance or Family Supplement providing that the family meets the means test requirements. Families need only fill in the form sent to them once a year and supply details of their taxable income for the previous year. As previously mentioned, once the child turns sixteen, home-schooled children are generally not eligible for Austudy. They are eligible however for Family Allowance and Family Supplement until at least eighteen. Where it says school, fill in the name your own home school. Do not supply extra information unless it is required of you as it may be confusing The form will enquire why the child is not applying for Austudy. "Not attending an approved school" has been accepted as a sufficient reason.

Families have found that you may be refused first time or only be offered Family Allowance. Do not accept this, appeal! This is done by simply writing back and stating why you should be given Family Supplement. If your child has some sort of a student identity card e.g. student concession card for bus or train enclose a photocopy of the card. Government Departments accept another Department's word that the child is a student.

Austudy
Family Allowance
Family Supplement
Formal Training Allowance

Once this letter has been received, even if it takes several months to settle, then parents are entitled to be back paid. We were paid Family Supplement for Cindy until she reached eighteen. This could have been received far longer if we were supporting her as a student. With Frank, they paid us for two months and then stopped payment because they had not processed the form within their deadline. We were then required to fill out another form, on the basis of which they decided that they would allow us $20 per week in Family Allowance.

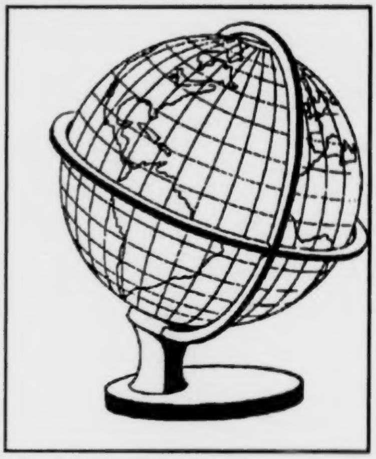
We wrote back and asked why they had given Family Supplement to us for Cindy and not for Frank. Before they would believe that Cindy had been granted this allowance we had to forward a copy of the letter sent by their Department to us, stating that we would receive Family Supplement for Cindy. Their file contained no record of their own letter. We have heard of similar cases, so suggest that you file all letters from Social Security. A letter has been since received stating that the Family Supplement has been reinstated and that we will receive $73 per fortnight for Frank. (We also have five current Health Cards since every time they changed their mind they sent another card.)

N.B. It is important to file any letters you receive from them since they seem not to file their own letters or else they lose them. Copies of Student Met Cards have also been accepted by Social Security as evidence that a child is a student. This should be produced at the time of an appeal.

Formal Training Allowance

A Formal Training Allowance is a far better allowance than Austudy. Once a student has finished school and is under eighteen years of age or has been on the Commonwealth Employment Register for six months, they become eligible for the allowance providing they are prepared to undertake work related courses. While undertaking these courses students may apply for jobs but do not appear on the statistics as unemployed. In the present economic climate the C.E.S are happy to allow students to choose any course they like providing it will be likely to be of benefit in gaining a job.

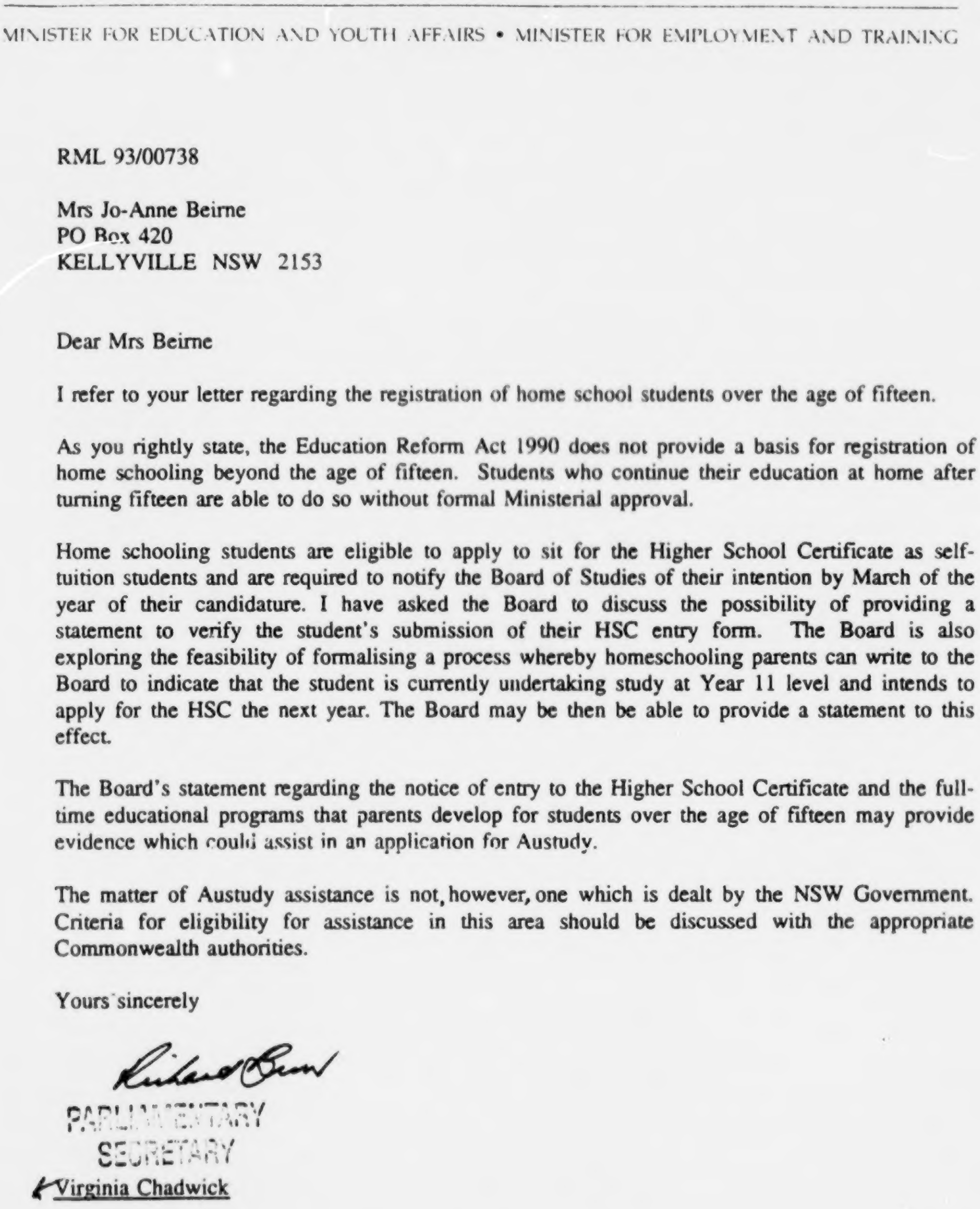
All courses are paid for, books are supplied, and the student is not required to pay the Higher Education Tax. An allowance, depending on age, of approximately $149 a fortnight, is also paid. This helps provide for fares, clothes etc.. It is an asset, when applying for a job, to be able to show an employer that the applicant's time has been spent productively. The allowance is counted as income for taxation purposes. A Health Care Card is provided which, among other things, allows the student to travel for half the price on public transport.



Eligibility for Austudy

Jo-Anne Beirne

As Frank Marrett points out in his article **'Government Allowances for Older Children'**, Austudy is available to students once they turn sixteen and are registered at an approved school (subject to a means test). Homeschoolers generally cannot be registered in this way because the Education Acts all over Australia still specify the ages of compulsory schooling as 6-15 years ie educ. legislation governing homeschooling does not presume to register a child not at school after 15 years. However there are ways around this, most notably those pointed out by Frank Marrett. As well, I am aware of one homeschooling family who is in receipt of Austudy for their over 15 year old, so it can be taken on a case by case basis. Also I have approached the NSW Education Minister Mrs Chadwick re some method of handling this less than perfect situation. As ususal her office has been most helpful - the response follows.



MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND YOUTH AFFAIRS • MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

RML 93/00738

Mrs Jo-Anne Beirne
PO Box 420
KELLYVILLE NSW 2153

Dear Mrs Beirne

I refer to your letter regarding the registration of home school students over the age of fifteen.

As you rightly state, the Education Reform Act 1990 does not provide a basis for registration of home schooling beyond the age of fifteen. Students who continue their education at home after turning fifteen are able to do so without formal Ministerial approval.

Home schooling students are eligible to apply to sit for the Higher School Certificate as self-tuition students and are required to notify the Board of Studies of their intention by March of the year of their candidature. I have asked the Board to discuss the possibility of providing a statement to verify the student's submission of their HSC entry form. The Board is also exploring the feasibility of formalising a process whereby homeschooling parents can write to the Board to indicate that the student is currently undertaking study at Year 11 level and intends to apply for the HSC the next year. The Board may be then be able to provide a statement to this effect.

The Board's statement regarding the notice of entry to the Higher School Certificate and the full-time educational programs that parents develop for students over the age of fifteen may provide evidence which could assist in an application for Austudy.

The matter of Austudy assistance is not, however, one which is dealt by the NSW Government. Criteria for eligibility for assistance in this area should be discussed with the appropriate Commonwealth authorities.

Yours sincerely

PARLIAMENTARY
SECRETARY
f Virginia Chadwick

Paying Parents to Stay at Home

Steve Biddulph

Reprinted from Sydney's Child Volume 4 No.3 March 1993 Their phone number is 484 5334. Sydney's Child is delivered to over 950 locations Sydney wide effectively distributing 47, 000 papers to Sydney parents. Sydney's Child is a great publication available free from your local library in Sydney and soon to be started in Melbourne. They have great feature articles as well as heaps of information about resources, events, outings etc.

There's a lot of noise these days about Childcare, as politicians woo the parent vote. Quietly, around Australia, a much more radical proposal is being discussed. The idea is - that if we really value children, if we really want to 'save the family', we should pay a wage to mothers (or fathers) who choose to care for their kids full time at home. In this special article, author Steve Biddulph argues as to why this idea now has to be seriously examined...

I'm a psychologist and a father - not (thank God!) an economist or a politician. So up until now I've always kept my writing firmly focused on the perennial concerns of family life - discipline, love, marriage, communication. But as someone who has attacked what has happened to the Australian family over the last 20 years and as one who has talked to thousands of parents across Australia each year, I feel a personal responsibility to speak up about what can no longer be ignored. I cannot put it more plainly than this - the Australian family is dying of stress.

You know what I'm talking about. In ways that have never been so serious or so widespread, the average, normal, middle of the road family - your family and mine - is being squeezed into so much financial and emotional turmoil that it can not survive much longer. You can see this with your own eyes. In your own street, amongst your friends, perhaps in your own home, marriages are falling apart, health is being damaged, kids are being mistreated; teenagers are in despair. It hasn't always been like this. After all, parents with children have only four simple needs - some way to make a living, somewhere to live, the time to make the marriage work and above all, to be able to care for our children. Although simple, these things take time and money and in the nineties, we often have too little of either. Life just isn't working. Our whole vision of where we want to go, what we want to be, has become an impossible dream.

While these are responsibilities of the individual, the associated problems are now beyond the individual. The kind of world we live in - our cities, our circumstances, resemble nothing so much as a horrible mistake. We have floundered into the kind of society that none of us really wants. There are causes we can tackle though - the economic priorities of our governments and corporate forces that shape the way we live and which have become a hazard to life and health. We cannot do our part as parents unless the structures we live in support this goal. Our society, one hopes unintentionally, but undeniably, has become anti-family. Parents are becoming more educated, more committed and more interested in their children, and yet at the same time they are pulled away from their children by the demands of staying afloat.

Commentators as diverse as Bettina Arndt, Bob Santamaria, Geraldine Doogue and many others, have pointed out the same trend, in recent articles. On the one end of the social scale are the under-worked. We have a million people unemployed. 650,000 children are now living in families where neither parent has a job and 500 more join them every day. Then there are the over-worked. These days, having a job can feel as insecure as not having one. Many people with jobs now work 50-60 hour weeks, just to hold on to them. This is especially true of small business but also of private enterprise and government workers. These people tell of horrendously stressed lifestyles - rushing to childcare, getting transport, trying to snatch sleep, neglecting relationships, suffering health problems, barely earning enough to offset the costs of childcare, transport, etc and guiltily spending the money on 'making it up to the kids' for not being there.

The Two Income Family isn't working!

Having two incomes in a family isn't a sin. But it IS a stress. A huge number of mothers with young children feel they must return to work (26% of them when their children are less than one year old). They feel pressured to do this because their partners do not have jobs or the value of their partner's wages has so eroded that they cannot support a family on their income alone. Also (and this must be said) in some families both parents work, basically, for greed and take jobs that others would more deservedly need, just as some people have children whom they neglect in order to follow a career. This group is, thankfully, a small minority.

The economy wants women and not men. Without us fully realising it, the shape of the workforce has changed dramatically and perhaps permanently. Researchers point out that women's employment, especially in low status jobs and part-time jobs has increased hugely, despite the recession. The fact is that women will tolerate a job which many men will not. A part-time low status job ghetto is being created, occupied by women who will make the sacrifice for the sake of the family but feel torn in half by the cost in time and energy.

Women have an equal right to work. But I also believe mothers of young children have the right not to work. At the moment many women do not have this choice. (Fathers, of course have long been deprived of real time with their children and this situation is worsening. Working fathers so often today leave home each morning early and return after dark, exhausted).

Once women had to fight for the right to a career. It seems now we have to fight for the right to parent our own children. Which means an economic right. This brings us to the question of Parent Pay - the proposal that we pay a wage to parents to stay at home to raise their own children up to school age.

Parent Pay - solving two problems at once.

The concept of parent pay has been around for a number of years and was recently put back on the agenda by a NSW Labor backbencher. It isn't such an extreme idea. We already pay people for all kinds of other public service. For instance, the central tenet of all governments, from the Fraser era onwards, has been to allow unemployment to rise in the service of restructuring our economy. We now unemploy one million Australians. We pay them for this 'service' with unemployment benefits. They are paid not to have a job.

At the same time there are contradictory policies. We want to free people to participate in the workforce. So we subsidise childcare services, provide incentives and as Bronwyn Donaghy pointed out in Parents Magazine recently, we have a tax system that greatly favours the dual income family. The government may subsidise a childcare centre to the tune of $120 a week. Is it so much to ask that they pay parents to provide the childcare themselves?

Everyone has the right to seek and hopefully find meaningful work. Men and women need the stimulation, participation and rewards that work brings. However, work must be chosen, must be a REAL choice. Women often have to work at unfulfilling, menial, dead end jobs, while their children are cared for by strangers, at great expense and with a lot of heartache, inconvenience and stress. What have we done to mothers? Why should they be forced into menial work and be forced to hand over the skilled and satisfying work of parenting their own young children - especially when others less skilled or more in need of work would prize the chance to have that job.

Work is now such a scarce commodity that we must avoid forcing those who would rather be at home with children (or in other forms of community service), to take the jobs others desperately want. What would Parent Pay mean in practice? The details obviously need thought and care. What follows are simply suggestions for starting the discussion.

How much should parents be paid?

Recent proposals for parent pay may have been insultingly small. Estimates of the work done by a mother at home with children have exceeded the $80 000 per year mark - if that work was to be carried out by paid staff, round the clock. I would estimate a reasonable salary for parenting to be $400 per week but to be practical, a more affordable level with widely beneficial effects, would be around the $200 mark.

What would be the conditions?

'Parent Pay' would be available to any family where one or both parents do not hold a full time job and be reducible in proportion until the nominated 'parenting' parent obtained part-time work. Either a father or a mother could be the one who nominates to be the 'parenting' person and the rate would be the same, regardless of how many children in the family. (The last thing we need to encourage is overpopulation!) Parent Pay would continue until all children are school age. Alternatively, it could continue at half rate until the youngest child is 18.

Where will the money come from?

The great beauty of 'Parent Pay' is that it kills two birds with one stone. The effect on the workforce would be immediate and dramatic. I would guess that some 60% of mothers of young children now working (and an unknown number of fathers) would leave the workforce immediately, if they had the economic means to do so. There would be a corresponding and immediate flood of jobs made available to the unemployed breadwinners - male and female, currently on the dole - as well as unemployed school leavers. Since unemployment benefits are currently $255 per week, there would be a net saving whenever a job was created.

Costing it out.

There is no doubt that Parent Pay would be costly in the short term. We are talking about half a million families with children under five receiving $10 000 per year each. That's five billion dollars (in the US system where a billion is a thousand million). If, in addition, parents of school aged children are paid at the half rate suggested, then we can add another $6.5 billion. For comparison, we now spend $4.5 billion on unemployment and $9 billion each year on defence. (Editor's Note: and about 15 billion a year on school (K-6) education alone). Luckily, there is an adjustable balance to Parent Pay - the more we pay, the more employed parents will take it up and the more jobs will be released, bringing other people off the dole. It doesn't seem any more of a gamble than many other of the changes currently happening in our economy.

Valuing what we care most about.

In this society, we show what we value by where we allocate money. Mothers and fathers, who stay at home to raise the kids often feel worthless, compared to those who work in `careers'. It's one of the most ingrained aspects of sexism to value the work of an executive shuffling papers, or the tycoon buying and borrowing, which produce nothing of value but devalue enormously the positive work that is done in the home and the community by people, usually women, who are paid nothing.

The work people do at home has monetary value and is a direct input to our national well being and productivity. Also, when people don't do this work, it costs us in health, crime, divorce and a myriad of other forms of expensive social problems. Paying people to work at home is not really THAT radical. Anything is possible. It's quite likely that one day people might pay for the privilege of working. The assumption of industry or government has always been that if we invest in the mines, farms, factories and companies (all massively subsidised by the taxpayer), hoping that these will thrive and ordinary people with families will benefit. But I feel if we don't invest in families now, then the social problems will be so enormous they will bring us to our knees.

As I said at the start, I am not an expert in these things. But I DO know that the state of the Australian family is in crisis. Before the 'Parent Pay' concept can be properly assessed, more informed people need to comment and more complex calculations need to be made. In the end, though, it will come down to votes, which means YOU.

What do you think?

Steve Biddulph author of the best seller 'The Secret of Happy Children' and the Director of the Collinsvale Institute in Hobart.

HOME EDUCATION ENHANCEMENT EXPERIENCE :

HOME EDUCATION WEEKEND GET-TOGETHER

- IN SEPTEMBER ....from 2pm 10th Sept. to 2pm 12th Sept. 1993.
- AT YARRAHAPPINI ADVENTIST YOUTH AND ECOLOGY CENTRE on the NSW coast at Grassy Head, south of Macksville.

This lovely conference centre venue is situated in forest (some rainforest) by the beach. There are 2 timber buildings with rooms with bunk beds and each building has shared bathroom facilities, another building has a large kitchen and dining/activities area and there is a laundry and recreation room too. There is also a nature study centre.

COST : $9 per person per night (children 5 and under free)

Bring your own bedding, pillows, food and personal items. Also bring fun things to share such as activities, games and ideas. The emphasis will be on meeting people, having a good time and sharing our home education experiences.

Facilitators : Joanne and Jaap Brugmans, Sphinx Rock, Kyogle Rd, via UKI 2484 Ph. 066-897473.

BOOKINGS NOW BEING TAKEN - if you can, please let us know about a month before if you are coming.

There is no doubt that home educators find their job challenging. This will be an opportunity for people to come together, to share and to grow. Children especially enjoy the contact and the activities and adults will find lots for them too. Our family have gained much from gatherings such as this and we look forward to spending time with lovely families again.

Feel free to let others know this is happening.

Liscensing and Christian Education

Dr Little

Reprinted from The Family School Magazine published by the Christian Family School Association of Australia P.O. BOx 237 Werribee Vic. 3030 Phone 03 741 1490.

Dr. Little, from Accelerated Christian Education, gave the following message at a Christian Educator's Conference at Olivet Christian College, Campbells Creek, Victoria, in 1986.

At the centre of all problems is the Lordship of Christ. The real question is who owns the children and who owns the church. To license is to allow or permit someone to do something. It is the permission to exist or do something. What words you use to describe this licensing really do not matter. You can call it approval, certification, registration, accreditation, assistance, or a request. It is just another name for licensing.

To find out whether or not you are being licensed ask yourself the question "What will happen if I do not accept this?" If the answer is "We will not allow you to continue. We will force you to close." then you have been licensed. Many Christians distinguish between different forms of licenses. They do not mind the Government licensing cars, insurance, medicine, etc. but most Christians object to the licensing of the Church and the family.

There are some crucial questions we must ask:

1. Will my faith allow me to accept State licensing for my church ministry? My Sunday school? My Sunday service? My family?
2. Does the Lordship of Jesus Christ over everything in my church exclude the state from becoming Lord over one of Christ's ministries? Eph 1:20-23, Col 1:16-19
3. Is our church school an integral inseparable part of our church? Is our home school an integral part of the family?

Things to think about

1. Only a higher authority can license a lower.
2. The question in the licensing is Lordship.
3. A dangerous justification of licensing is pointing to the "reasonable" registration while being blind to the relationship involved.
4. Licensing is ineffective. It does not maintain standards.
5. Licensing eventually carries the philosophy of those in power. Neutrality is impossible.
6. The person who issues the license can at any time revoke it.
7. In registering we are seeking approval of a system which already disapproves of us. Neither do parents seeking to register approve of those who are doing the registering for they have already taken their children out of its system.
8. How would state school teachers react if it was the Church that had to give them permission to register their state schools.

Government Subsidies

1. Biblically, education is not the responsibility of government. It is the responsibility of the parents and the church. Why then should the Government be asked to pay for it?
2. Subsidies cripple the recipient to a place where he becomes dependent.
3. Subsidies are an effective means of control.
4. Subsidies are a departure of a plan that God has blessed.
5. Subsidies teach the recipient to have faith in the Government rather than in God.

A reply to the "Licensing of Homeschooling" idea

Anna Adams

The view expressed in Dr Little's address about the 'Licensing' of homeschooling ignores the cultural, social and political realities of the 1990s.

Most Christians, (being law-abiding citizens), understand that they do not live in a society in which the Christian princples of decent living are religiously practised. The fact that our society has both Christian and non-Christian rapists, liars and thieves is graphic illustration that not all members of our society are equally ready to assume the responsibilities that go with personal freedom. It is the duty of governments to legislate to protect the good citizen, the weak and the innocent.

Fortunately in this era (unlike in the 1800s) children are considered to be weak, innocent andin need of protection and the government behaves in a Christian fashion, when it tries to protect the interests of children. Although their actions are not always perfect, I personally cannot find anything wrong with persons working in positions of authority negotiating with representatives of minority groups on creating conditions to grant them more freedoms . It seems the obvious development and application of democratic principles - people working together to extend the freedoms of a minority, provided that the minority can demonstrate that they are responsible enough to be granted those freedoms.

That homeschoolers have negotiated conditions to permit them to opt out of formal schooling, which was considered essential and the norm in Australia until very recent times should be seen as an incredible victory in the current cultural, political and social climate.

Homeschooling is the priviledge of families who are capable of understanding what the education of children involves and that the opening of freedoms to a minority has to be accompanied by certain responsibilities.

In NSW for instance, the legistlation has for the first time, anywhere in Australia, recognised that homeschooling is a viable educational alternative to public and private schooling. This legistlative move has been greeted with mixed response from homeschoolers themselves. On the one hand, all are pleased that at least homeschooling has not been outlawed. However, having been given this recognition, then comes the long and tiresome process of working out how to make this legislation work. This process can be seen as a dance between homeschoolers and public servants and how this dance will be seen at any one time, will depend on individual perspective.

Those who see evil everywhere, will not be able to recognise that our legislators and public servants (many of them Christian themselves) are just that - servants of the public, people trying to orchestrate a complex process that involves juggling and protecting many legitimate interests and concerns. They will understand that the registration of homeschooling is neither an attempt to licence families, nor to ursurp the authority of the Lord.

It should be obvious to any Christian concerned with State interference in church matters that at present, the state is very cautious in this area. For instance it should be very reassuring to witness the deliberate non-intervention of the state in the ordination of women issue. Especially as it could easily be argued under state legislation that that there is a direct conflict between anti-discrimination state law and church tradition. Yet the state does not assume to intervene.

While it is healthy to be constantly vigilant about protecting spiritual matters from secular concerns, it is not healthy to amplify and exaggerate reality to the point of paranoid hysteria in order to confuse trusting homeschooling families with periodic unnecessary "calls to arms". It is my opinion that righteous outrage is better contained until such a time when the state may attempt to direct Christian dogma or the manner in which it is taught. Meanwhile, we can all instruct our children in religious and spiritual contexts with a freedom that is the envy of millions of families throughout the world.

Would that we, as parents, provide a shining example of the compassionate Christian ideals to our children by focusing on how much we have instead of demanding a hostile and aggressive manner that we deserve to enjoy the freedoms of heaven right now here on earth. The reality is that we can only enjoy those freedoms when we have worked hard enough demonstrating by our actions, our integrity and responsibility.

Parenting

Kathy Boles

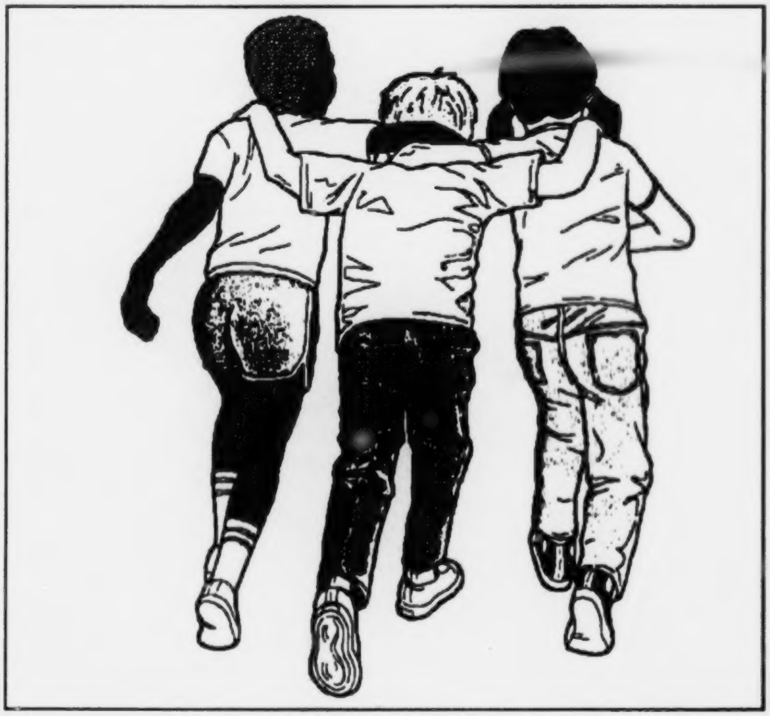
Kathy Boles, her husband and family live at Emu Park in Queensland. Kathy is the organiser of the annual Central Queensland Get Together.

Parenting has been a very educational experience for me when I think of what I have learned in the last seven and a half years. Its hard to imagine what my life would be like now without children. Not only have many of my illusions about children and child-rearing been shattered and my practical understanding increased enormously but my understanding of myself has grown accordingly.

Recently I gained some new insight into my beliefs about child-rearing. Of course, in my case as in many others, home education is a natural progression of parenting. I feel so strongly about keeping my children out of school that if this does not happen I will feel as though my last illusion has been shattered and that I have failed. Why do I feel like this?

I have long understood that much of my life and child-rearing style is a reaction to my upbringing. Whereas some people choose consciously or otherwise to emulate their parents, I was one of those who did the opposite. Those of my parents' generation were cheated out of so much of parenting's pleasures. It is distressing to me that so many still believe in what I believe are out-dated ways of bringing up children, e.g. scheduled feeding, leaving babies to cry, punishment for minor infringements (the punishment not fitting the crime), babies viewed almost as enemies who try to manipulate their parents and must be controlled even to the extent of breaking their spirit and so on.

My own experience of powerlessness at home and a school has created in me a control-freak. I have to have control over my time as so much control was taken from me as a child. I find myself getting edgy if events or people wrest this from me. How does this relate to home education? I want to control my children's experience insofar as I don't want them to suffer the same lack of control of their time and loss of freedom and human rights as I experienced. My time was taken up by school, brownies-guides, Sunday School and so on, used as baby-sitters as well as for their stated purposes. Whatever good these institutions may have done me they imposed an external and mostly irrelevant timetable on me so that when I wasn't feeling inadequate for not doing well enough I was feeling bored but unable to escape. It is now recognised that because children are so vulnerable, injustices adults would not tolerate are imposed upon them without thought. I believe this wresting of control of their lives away from children helps to make them dependent on others to make decisions for them. I try to give my children as much control over what happens to them as I can in minor and major aspects of their lives. Home education gives us all more time and freedom to do this.



I also want to control the quality of my children's experiences with others and through this provide them with freedom and flexibility. This may sound illogical. Let me give an example. By not putting them in situations where they will be belittled into conforming to peer pressure I hope I will enable them to have the freedom to grow up true to themselves rather than as conformists. Of course, every parent controls his child's time and experience but I suppose the difference here is the conscious effort to go against the crowd to create a lifestyle for my children that provides them with the skills to be themselves.

I am concerned that my children have a more positive childhood than I experienced. I know I will also have to accept the people my children become, difficult as this may be if it doesn't fit the picture I have in my mind.

Taking the Plunge:

Getting my kids out of school

Robyn Lake

It wasn't a deep seated dissatisfaction with the Education System that led me to consider homeschooling as an option. My interest in homeschooling had been sparked by a friend who, some two and a half years ago, had removed her children from a fine and well respected Christian School to teach them at home. I watched with great intrigue as this way of teaching unfolded. The idea began to settle in the back of my mind, however I believed it to be an impossible situation given our work and home life.

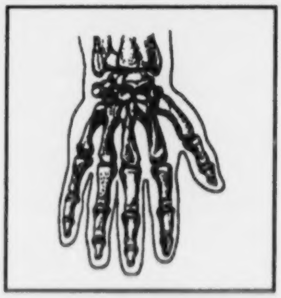
I continued to watch my two children flourish at their large public school. They achieved well and had the motivation to succeed when they applied themselves to a task. They were popular socially and interacted normally. My exuberant son managed to avoid trouble at school .(However, we did occasionally get the short end of the stick at home).

I also enjoyed their school and I spent many hours a week in a voluntary capacity working in their classrooms, helping with remedial children, compiling the year book and other activities. I learnt which teachers were to be feared, which children were to be avoided and I was able to observe my children first hand. We experienced the highs and lows of school life together. We spent many afternoons discussing school life, sorting out peer conflicts, listening to the latest school news and admiring many handiworks and, on the odd occasion, nurturing someone's wounded self esteem. I accepted these daily occurrences as normal and I was glad my children talked to me about school and I could be part of their school life. I retained a positive attitude to their education. On the odd occasion that I needed to express a concern to a teacher, I was always well received. We believed our children's school was the best we could offer our children and accepted that along with the negative it had a lot of good and positive experiences for our children.

Sometime early in my son's third year of school I began to get a strong conviction that homeschooling may present a more positive form of education. As I am a Christian, I began to prayerfully consider the option of homeschooling. The more I prayed about it the more appealing it became. At this time I began to read a lot of articles about homeschooling. I was fortunate to have a friend nearby also considering the homeschooling option. She passed onto me many books, articles, videos, magazines and journals. I read everything I could afford to and had access to. Slowly my ideas and conceptions of education began to change.

I started to view the children's school in a more analytical way. Looking to see where I could improve and how much of my time homeschooling would actually involve. One of my frustration's with school life was that there was never enough time to spend with my children. I believed I should be teaching them more practical life skills but by the time school was over, music practice attended to and homework completed, it seemed mean to take away their only hour of free play to teach them how to prepare a meal or vacuum the lounge room. I wanted more time with them, more input and I wanted to take charge of them. At this point I seemed to have many concerns as to how the homeschool concept really functioned in the day to day running of the home.

One of the major considerations I had was that of time. I wondered how I could find the 6 hours I considered necessary each day to teach the children. I was fortunate, because I had given up working outside the home some years ago. However, I was involved in many time consuming activities. My husband's job by its very nature is demanding, I felt there was not time to be found in our schedule for homeschooling. As I began to observe the classroom, I realised that although my children were away from me for 6 hours each day actual formal teaching time was nowhere near that. School commenced at 9:15 am, however, after lining up and the general business of the school room, children were rarely ready to begin before 9:45 am. I watched my son repeatedly complete his work in the 10 minutes before recess having spent a good half an hour of the lesson chatting, fiddling and generally wasting time. When I considered assemblies, special occasions, sports days, visitors, news and the general day to day business, I realised I could complete their formal learning in one and a half hours each day, leaving them free to follow their own interests, read, or work with me. The homeschooling option began to become more attainable.



There were however still many hurdles for me to grapple with. My husband fully supported my research and conclusions and although a teacher himself never felt threatened by the concept of homeschooling. This was a great encouragement. What of our friends? Many of them are teachers themselves and had previously taught my children, they were now part of our social circle. I didn't want to offend them, and as it is in a country town, I certainly couldn't hide the notion of homeschooling the children. We decided the best approach would be not to mention anything until the last day of the school year when we would tell the children's headmaster and their respective teachers.

What about the children and their friends? After being at a school for 5 years and being settled in a circle of friends since they were 5 years old was a homeschooling decision too difficult for them. Would they miss their friends? How would I feel about leaving a school where I had many social contacts and spent in excess of 8 hours each week? I had always been met with courtesy and was free to use whatever facility I needed to complete various tasks I was involved with. What gripe did I have with the school to warrant homeschooling? I oscillated between taking up homeschooling or leaving the children in school.

These questions caused a great deal of thought, consideration and at times, consternation. For anyone involved in a good school and considering homeschooling these are hard questions, which, may lead to the decision to leave the children at school, however, my husband and I continued to read many books., we attended a seminar and really weighed up the pros and cons. We pressed ahead, applied for and received registration (even before we were sure we were going to homeschool). It was after we were registered that we made a two year commitment to homeschool our two children.

When we finally approached the children's headmaster we were received with great interest. He had heard a little of the concept of homeschooling, mainly through the media, and was intrigued as to how it would function. He offered us help in any way and welcomed us to use any resources or curriculums we needed. He was in no way offended or defensive.

We then approached the children's teachers, who also showed a great deal of interest. One teacher in particular had not come into contact with the concept and showed great interest which led us to a discussion of some hour in length. The headmaster and teachers concerned had no trouble understanding our reasons for homeschooling our children. They agreed with unfavourable peer pressure and influence and were too familiar with society's ills to pass negative judgement on our decision. We left the school on a positive note with friendships still intact.

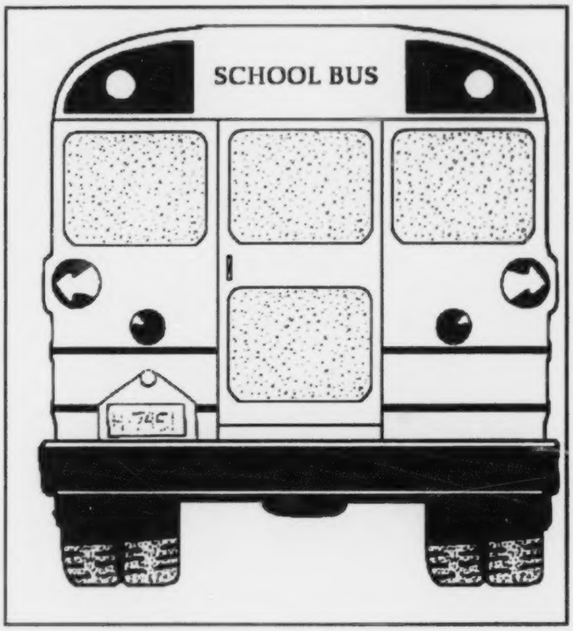
We told the children of our intention to homeschool after the school year had finished. They were familiar with the concept and had an number of friends in other cities who were homeschooled. We believe had we told the children earlier, they would have had time for regrets, questions, doubts and their last weeks of school would have been unsettling and melancholic. This way the decision was final, the school year was finished and it would be weeks before the holidays were over and our minds turned back to school. Our announcement of our intention was more than favourably met with them. The only anxiety expressed was a cry of "what about our friends". They accepted our decision and trusted us to be able to make the correct decisions to best direct their lives.

What about the wider community? In all the people we've told from family (who incidentally are teachers themselves) to shopkeepers, librarians, friends and acquaintances, I've only had one negative reaction which was directed at the invasion on my privacy and my time not on our choice of education.

What of my anxieties and concerns? To be honest, I've been to busy to give it much thought. On the odd occasion we whizz past school, I have a twinge of melancholy but its only brief and serves to remind me perhaps the children feel this also. I then make a special effort to see the children's friends or have an extra special outing and school fades into the past.

Now we've begun a new school year at home. I wonder why I worried so much about the side issues. Things that were once important to me are insignificant and I wonder why the hurdle of decision seemed so great. I ponder the worries I had of "taking the plunge". Is it the little bit of education ingrained in us, the need to follow tradition, not to be different or the security of the familiar? I'm glad I followed my instincts enough to know I could teach my children.

Robyn Lake is not this author's real name, she wishes to remain anonymous, but the story is true.



Life is too short to procrastinate over our children's education. I'm aware my children might have grown up before I took the plunge and then I'd have to live with regret. I'm glad I broke with the bonds of traditional education and took control over our children's schooling. Now we're the only ones to blame for their faults but we can live with that. I realise it was the hurdles that were hard to jump not the track on the other side.

To School or not to school? That is the question.

Norah Colvin

Reprinted from Classroom magazine - Volume 13, No2 March, 1993. Published by Ashton Scholastic (Kindly sent by Kirsty Hughes)

My dissatisfaction with schooling began when I was a young teacher in a very administration-oriented school where everything ran to a rigid timetable. There was no place for a teacher's individual style of working, nor for the individual needs of students. My three years of training had ill-prepared me for the realities of the classroom

Disillusioned, I resigned shortly after, vowing never to return to teaching. At that time I had a young son. His development fascinated me. Although I had lost faith in schools, I had not lost my interest in education. I sought out and read books on alternative education strategies. I was both challenged and excited by what I read and reassured that I was not alone in my beliefs.....

Now my daughter is of school age...it leaves me in quite a predicament. Socialisation is important, but I value co-operation over the competitiveness of our school system. Many classroom and playground survival strategies are required nowhere else. I do not need to create artificial role-play situations for learning social skills - my daughter is already a very social being.

I want her to mix with all age groups and so I favour multi-age groupings over the more traditional and artificial single-age classes. If she was to go to school, she would always be one of the oldest in a single-age group, as she has a February birthday.....

So should I ignore my beliefs and dreams, enrol her in the closest school and hope for the best? Or should I educate her at home?

I fear for my daughter's wonderful creativity and independence in thought. In any class with twenty to twenty-five students, there will always be some degree of conformity; more in some classes , less in others. I fear she may, like many others, find classwork repetitive and unchallenging. She has always been the instigator and director of her own learning. She already reads as confidently and fluently as many would in their second year of school, and has a good understanding of mathematical concepts. She is a confident problem-solver and independent thinker. She has achieved all this without formal 'lessons'.

I fear teachers such as those who taught my son and were unaware of his abilities until end-of-year testing. I fear teachers who fail to see what children can do, but only what they can't do. I fear teachers who do not acknowledge or cater for individual styles and rates of learning, or personal interests. Mostly I fear the possibility of my daughter's education being placed in the hands of a less-than-competent teacher. I can only be amused when others question my ability to home educate. How can it be more difficult to educate just one, and the one that I know best?

I am not reluctant to let my daughter go. I value independence greatly. It would be much easier if I could accept the status quo. Home education requires a huge commitment both of time and finance. I have even considered home educating only until she is about eight years old. I figure that by then she will have developed enough self-confidence and independence in her learning to survive whatever happens beyond that. But will she?

I would be delighted to hear the opinions of other readers; and would be especially pleased to hear from home educators in my local area (west Brisbane).

How can I hope to match the teachers' training?

Jean Bendell

This excerpt is taken from the English book School's Out: Educating Your Child At Home

......It could be argued that teachers are the best people to teach our children as they have been specifically trained for this. But just as equipment is only of value if the child learns through its use - it has no worth otherwise - the qualifications of the teachers are of little value unless the child is actually learning. Looking back, we can all remember teachers teaching away unaware that nearly all of what they were saying fell on deaf ears. Or perhaps they were perfectly well aware. Perhaps that is the system.

Recent research by Barbara Tizsard and Martin Hughes shows that young children learn a great deal through quite ordinary family conversations at home and that the sort of casual talk that goes on at the dinner table is just as valuable as conversation that has a more obvious educational content. Their book *Young Children Talking* compares the quality of conversation at home and in school. Children at home have more opportunity to ask questions and are more likely to be able to take a lead in the conversation. In schools, discussions are often directed by teachers to achieve the ends that the teachers, and not the children, have in mind.

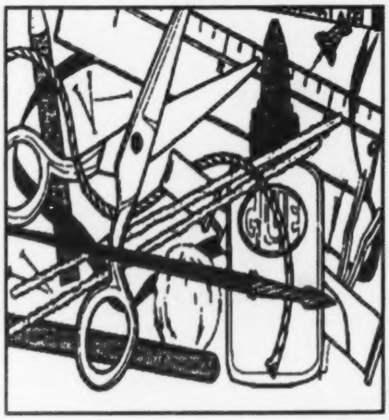
I came across an example of this recently on a television programme about teaching. A mathematical problem was being discussed with some pupils. Just in case we missed the fact that the teacher was controlling the conversation, the narrator pointed this out to us - `Note how she draws the right questions out of the children.' This was considered skillful teaching. But sometimes it is the*wrong* questions that will give us a greater insight into what the child understands. When the child knows that the wrong questions are unwelcome, she will learn to be inhibited about asking anything.

David Lewis' research on exceptional children (reported in his book *How to be a Gifted Parent*, Souvenir Press, 1979) found that teachers do not value question-asking in the same way that parents do. In his study, parents and teachers were asked to arrange in order of importance ten characteristics of cleverness. Of the parents in the survey, 95% thought question-asking was highly important whereas this was placed in the *last three* by 85% of teachers. Teachers plumped for things like neat work and good school reports but these were rated as *least* important by over 90% of the parents. Given those findings, who do you think is best qualified to answer children's questions - the parent who welcomes questions even if she does not know the answers or the teacher who would frankly prefer fewer questions and tidier work?

Like parents, teachers don't know all the answers. Yet I recall a friend at school commenting that the difference between the pupils and the teachers was that we would say, "I think ..." or "I read somewhere that .." even about something we knew, whereas teachers would say the equivalent of "This is so". Is it that teachers believe they have to make statements of fact in order to gain credibility? Perhaps we carry through to adulthood the memory of their supposed infallibility. Perhaps this is why so many parents lack confidence and feel they have to rely on teachers to come up with the answers to their children's questions. As parents we don't need to keep a class of thirty under the spell of believing that we know all the answers. We don't need to keep the illusion going that we are the fountain of all knowledge - our children know better than to believe that.

If we don't know the answers we can show our children the way they can be found. It is not always possible - nor desirable, I think - to rush off and look up the answer at the precise moment the question is asked. While it seems commendable to do so, it would make the child realise that this is no ordinary conversation going on but an educational event. Better to continue an interesting conversation in a normal and relaxed way even if there are questions in it you don't know the answer to. In a conversation with adults you would not dream of rushing off to check up facts in books. If you feel you have to do this with your children, they would soon see that conversations with them are not considered valuable or their own sake but as a vehicle for education.

My feeling is that - before reaching for the books - it is better to admit that you do not know, to ask her what she thinks and to discuss the various possibilities you both come up with. And you can do this while washing the dishes or bathing the baby. I am sure that this line of approach is good for the child's confidence - as well as her ability to think. Always slavishly searching for the one right answer straight off will make the child feel that the answers she comes up with are inadequate - that her ability to understand the world is inadequate.



A Queensland Home Education Organisation?

Ben Mettes

Reprinted from the magazine Optionality, March 1993 edition. For more information on this journal and the principles behind Optionality see the end of this article.

Organisations targeting special interest groups can be most useful. However, when there are calls for single, geographically oriented organisation, one should be suspicious.

Benefits of Organising

There are often calls for all involved in home-education in Queensland to get organised. Other State Governments, in particular in New South Wales and Victoria, have more fully organised home-education as a genuine alternative to school, whereas the Queensland Government still seems to regard home-education as something for families living in areas too remote to be serviced by schools.

Frequently mentione benefits of having a State-wide Home-Education Organisation:

1. To provide better support for those involved in home-education, e.g. by making available information, by bulk buying of educational items, by offering legal aid, by assisting with setting up groups, meetings and networks and other ways for those involved in home-education to get in contact with each other;
2. To give home-education a broad platform from where home-education can be promoted with prospective members, in the media, with educational organisations and with the government;
3. To act as a catalyst for legal recognition of home-education, lobbying with the Departments of Family Services, Education, Taxation and with anti-discrimination and other authorities.

The Government's Way

However, there are some big dangers in these calls for such an organisation. To better understand these dangers, one first has to look at the way the Government operates. The Government is essentially dictatorial, it makes a single law and everyone has to obey this law or face punishment. Decisions taken by the Government do not follow the people's wishes in some respect - those in power may be elected in a multi-party democratic system - but many, often a majority, do not agree with the view of the party in charge in Parliament.

To protect the position of minorities, the Government observes civil rights and liberties to some extent. But in many cases, the Government blatantly ignores such rights. Those who want to educate their own children are the living proof of this. They are the victims of a dictatorial system that is based on majority rule and prone to adopt only a single solution to fit all.

NO
VOTE NO
WE Want

By largely controlling the curriculum, qualifications, appointments and financial affairs of schools, the Government ensures that its voice gets heard in education. Although the right to choose the best form of education for children is widely accepted to be with the parents and although even the United Nations have incorporated such rights in their protocols, the Australian Government still insists that children of a given age compulsorily enrol with and attend its preferred educational institutions. No matter which party is in power, the system stays essentially the same and, inevitably, there are victims of this system.

Let us not Collaborate!

The conclusion that those involved in home-education should draw, is that we should not imitate this system among ourselves. By setting up a single organisation aiming to cover and respect all those involved in home-education, we would do exactly the same thing the Government does. Perhaps the spokespersons of such an organisation would be elected and instructed by majority vote, but the voice of those who are different and do not fit in with a majority view, will not be heard, worse, will be misrepresented.

Especially when such an organisation is to be a 'Queensland' organisation, there is an even bigger danger of collaborating with the Government to the detriment of minority views. Why endorse the Government's artificially drawn borders? These borders have little to do with education, have they? A 'Queensland' organisation runs the risk of focusing on the State Government, even collaborating with the State Government, while, in fact federal issues such as taxation may be more important to home-education than the compulsory nature of school as imposed by the State Government. If the Government organises society along feudal lines of local dictators, this is no reason for those involved in home-education to imitate such despicable policies, as they are the very victims of such policies.

Feudalism and dictatorship are characterised by the fact that they accept only one ruler locally. The Government bribes many groups into collaboration by giving them money, by negotiating exclusively with them, by making sure that only one organisation is dominant in each area. The Government would love to see a single Queensland Home Education Organisation. This would give the Government the opportunity of dealing with only one group, negotiate an agreement on the preferred legislation and possibly provide some funding. Anyone who disagrees can then be told: "You have had your say, now you must stick to majority rule!" There is a big danger that such a single organisation will effectively become a trade union for those involved in home education. The Government may even offer funding and legal recognition to members of such an organisation (on an exclusive basis) in return for control and compulsory membership for all those who want to be involved in home-education.

Constitutional Prudence

This does not mean that there should be no organisation active in the area of home-education at all. There should be a multitude of such organisations and, in fact, there are. Many families meet on a regular basis and thus form their own little organisation. What should be avoided is that one organisation claims to represent all those involved in home-education and claims to have a mandate to 'negotiate' with the Government as to how funding should be allocated and who is entitled to educate their own children. Therefore, it is highly recommended that any organisation active in the area of home-education build adequate safe-guards in its constitution or articles to prevent this from happening. The following clauses could be used as examples.

1. The organisation does not claim or aim to cover a majority of those involved in home-education;
2. If there is a suspicion that the organisation becomes the dominant organisation in home-education, the organisation will split up into two different organisations, each with half of the organisation's assets and with half the organisation's membership (randomly allocated);
3. Spokespersons for the organisation will not claim or aim to define what constitutes 'home-education' and who is or is not fit for this. These are ideas only; each organisation should work out how to best deal with this issue.

Alternatively, the organisation could abstain from direct contact with the Government, while promoting home-education and exposing in the media the absurdity of the Government's position on education. Some organisations may not get involved in discussions about legislation at all, but concentrate entirely on support activities. In that case, there is less need for constitutional safeguards. However, if such a 'non-political' organisation were to grow to become a majority organisation, it will inevitably have some political clout and should be cautious.

Few organisations have built such safeguards into their constitution, which shows just how little respect there is in society for optionality. Instead, most organisations seem eager to become the dominant force in their area, not realising that once they have 'beaten the competition', there are no incentives for innovation and improvement of efficiency, quality and service. A single organisation dominating an area is prone to collaboration with the Government, in order to hang on to power in the face of inevitable decline.

It is hard *not* to collaborate with the Government. In order to conduct business, for example, one has to register a business name, which has to be displayed in a conspicuous way on the outside of all premises where business is deemed to be conducted. Anyone setting up an organisation will be confronted with huge amounts of red tape. Rather than adding to this, we should simply aim for more optionality.

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Homeschooling in the Media

Print Media

HOMESCHOOLING IS IT FOR YOU?

Awake 8th April 1993

"An eccentricity that has become a national movement." That is how*Time* magazine recently described home schooling in the United States - a growing trend championed by parents who believe that the best education a child can receive is available in his or her own living room, not in the traditional classroom. Still viewed by some as eccentric or even revolutionary, home schooling is, nevertheless, winning more advocates every year. Researchers say the home schooling ranks have swelled from about 15,000 in 1970 to 500,000 in 1990. Some home schooling advocates claim that more than a million families in the United States are now schooling their children at home.

Why They Do It

Interestingly, the *National Catholic Reporter* estimates that from 50 to 90 percent of US parents who practise home schooling do so for religious reasons. These parents are generally concerned about protecting their children from what they perceive as atheistic influences in the schools. "The backbone of the home school movement is the Christian Fundamentalist community, which believes that religion is either abused or ignored in the classroom," said *Time* magazine. "Things were getting pretty out of hand with immorality in the schools," said one Christian man who decided several years ago that he and his wife would school their children at home. "We were concerned about our children and about the sad state of affairs in the school".

Sometimes, parents choose home schooling for educational rather than ideological reasons. They are fed up with overcrowded classrooms, low academic standards, and safety problems prevalent in many public schools. Disappointed by the often lacklustre results of institutional teaching, they believe that they can help their children more by giving the one-on-one attention that home schooling makes possible.

Explaining why some prefer home schooling, the book *Home Schools: An Alternative* states: "Parents [who school at home] have 100% involvement with their children ... They can devote their attention to their child's own education." ....

There is "virtually no empirical evidence available" to prove conclusively that homeschooling is an academically superior educational method, The Home School Manual explains. "While homeschoolers commonly do well, the proper research design would need to show that any difference is not due to other factors."

Many Still Sceptical

Home schooling is not without its critics. Many school officials have expressed concern over the inconsistent quality of education being offered through home school efforts. *Time* magazine put it this way: "Good intentions do not automatically translate into solid education."

(Thanks to those ten homeschooling families who sent me copies of this article)

KIDS LEARN AT HOME

Marcia Hawthorne *Penrith Press*
April 20 1993
Report about The Cartwright Family of Blaxland

Ashton Cartwright can tell you how far away the moon is and the temperature of the sun and how fast a bullet travels, but he has not been to school since he was six. The nine year old and his younger brother Christopher have been taught at home by their mother at Blaxland for three years. ....."you just follow what they are interested in " "We have almost no formal lessons anymore. I think the best way to learn is just go out and do it. The school system says learning is sequential but it isn't.....Following her children's interests has taken Mrs Cartwright to lapidary clubs, magic clubs, garage sales and numerous libraries and taught her a great deal.

(Thanks to Sue Cartwright for sending this article)

CHARGED MUM FIGHTS TO TEACH CHILDREN AT HOME

Courier Mail, 21st April, 1993

Ms Patris Bon, 29, of Red Hill, Queensland has been charged with two breaches of the State's Education Act for refusing to send her children to school. She was granted an adjournment in Brisbane Magistrate Court yesterday until her application to the Government for a home education dispensation has been processed...... Yesterday, Ms Bon said the case raised the question of children's value in society, which was hardly "children-friendly" when it insisted on depositing them in institutions from 9.00am to 3.00pm. The classroom catered for the average student, leaving all the others either struggling or bored, whereas home education offered children a custom-made education. Her children might be taught one-on-one but she vehemently rejected any suggestion home schooling would retard her children's social development. Socialising with her friends' children more than compensated for their lack of classmates. School was "enforced socialisation" where children were subjected to "competitive, nasty interaction".... A spokesperson for the Minister for Education, Mr Comben, said a conventional school environment was considered preferable but parents could opt for approved home education if they wished. Ms Bon will meet Education Department officials today to discuss conditions for dispensation and has been remanded to appear in Brisbane Magistrates Court with the next hearing June 10th.

(Jo-Anne's Note: If anyone wants more information on the Patris Bon case, or to offer Patris support they should contact Ben Mettes at the Third Home Education Network at PO Box 822 Beenleigh Qld)

NEW APPROACH TO EDUCATION - INTEREST IN HOME SCHOOLING ALTERNATIVE ON THE INCREASE

Alison Houston *Western Advocate* 6th May, 1993
Report about the Foundling Family of Bathurst

A growing interest in home schooling in the Central West reflects parents disillusionment with the conventional education system, and their concern over the peer influences under which their children fall at school. There are currently six families in Bathurst who have taken up the challenge of home schooling with still more in outlying areas....... (Marcelle said) "One of the prime reasons for my own decision was to ensure learning was an enjoyable experience for her children unlike her own vivid memory of school - boredom."Children are very enthusiastic to learn and motivated to learn on their own, but often once they've been at school for some time they become quite flat about the idea" she said. "I felt I could cover the same material with my children as they cover in school in a much shorter period of time".......
(Thanks to Julie Boxx for sending this article)

THEY'RE ALL REALLY QUITE AT HOME IN THE CLASS

Mara Beare *Sunday Times* (Western Australia) June 6th 1993

....Mrs Westenberg of Sawyers Valley (WA) thinks home tuition is best for her lads Luke 13, Gregory 10, Nicholas 9, Jonathon 4, Alexander 2 and Thomas six months. Husband Gerry agrees. So three years ago they decided to let the boys stay home and be taught at their own pace........... Mrs Westenberg says it is the children's choice to learn at home. They make a daily observation of their children's progress as well as providing them with gym and music lessons outside the home. "I am extremely confident they will do well," Mrs Westenberg says. "No-one has a monopoly on education"."It's fun" says Luke. "Right now I'm reading the Martian set of boks by Edgar Rice Burrows". The boys have a lot of friends in the Home Based Learners Network....
(Thanks to Susan Warner for sending this article)

Television

ATTITUDE

ABC TV 31st March 1993
The show dealt with the topic of the mind covering many areas including things like schizophrenia, mental disorders, genius and prodigies. Through a part of the show they introduced a 13 year old girl who was a genius at mathematics, English and music and was ready to enter university at age 13. In the interview she attributed her success to the fact that she was homeschooled for the first 9 years of her life. She seemed very positive, happy and well-balanced and said she wouldn't have swapped her homeschooling years for anything.
(Thanks to Kerri and Gary Pothin for sending this information)

HINCH

Channel 10 23rd April 1993
The Cartwright, Bon and one other family were covered in this positive analysis of homeschooling. The only down side being Hinch's ridiculous comment on socialisation at the end.

A CURRENT AFFAIR

Channel 9 11th June 1993
The Dennahy family, a family using the American curriculum Seton, of Victoria were covered in depth, as a follow up to an interview done with them 10 years ago on the same program. A superb, in depth and inspiring piece about homeschooling where the father, Bob and the teenage children came across beautifully. Followed up by a positive end comment by Mike Munro.

Introduce a friend to the Australian Homeschool Journal and get a $5 discount off your next order from the John Holt Bookstore

Education Issues in the Media

compiled by Jo-Anne Beirne

Union Rejects 'Femocrats'

Sydney Morning Herald April 1993 Julie Lewis

Senior women in the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Union have backed a call to pay parents to stay at home to look after children and endorsed an attack on "radical femocrats" in Canberra. "Radical femocrats ensconced in glass towers in Canberra have no idea what the ordinary working women and their families really want," the newsletter said.

It said paying parents to stay at home to look after children was a "sensible proposal". Families who would prefer to have one parent stay at home with their young children would be able to make that choice. The union's national secretary, Mr Joe de Bruyn, said yesterday that all money spent on child care subsidies and the 30 per cent child care rebate proposed by the Prime Minister in the first weeks of the election should be put towards the direct payment.

Govt strays from education plan

Sydney Morning Herald April 1993 Sian Powell

The first major deviation from the timetable laid down by the Scott Report, the enormously influential blueprint for education in NSW, has been authorised by the Minister for Education, Mrs Chadwick. The report, commissioned in the Metherell years, recommended that the transfer system for NSW teachers should be abandoned by term two of 1993 and replaced with "merit selection" where principals advertise for staff. But Mrs Chadwick has decided that principals can either advertise or accept a transferred teacher - a compromise to placate the NSW Teachers' Federation, which is firmly against merit selection.

School Violence - boy has permission to carry knife

The Sun-Herald 18th April, 1993 Karen Davey

A NSW parent, who says his son has been assaulted four times at school, has given the boy permission to carry a knife to defend himself. A spate of violence in western Sydney schools has lead irate parents to call for prompt action and tougher penalties against students who assault others in playgrounds. Rod Wylie, of Prospect, alleged his 12-year-old son Rodney had been attacked on four occasions at Evans High School at Blacktown. "Rodney is under orders not to fight at school or after school but if my boy is touched again I have told him to stab his attackers," Mr Wylie said. "If the school does not supply a safe place for my child, then carrying a knife is his only defence." Mrs Woolly of Lalor Park, said she had decided to keep her sons - Justin, nine, Jason, seven and Jeremy, four at home when school resumed tomorrow, rather than risk further bashings. "My boys are too scared to go back to school," Mrs Woolly said. "They've come home with buttons ripped off their shirts or the backs ripped out. These older kids have no right to bash up my kids just because they're slow learners." Shadow Education spokesman John Aquilina said police were being sent to Sydney schools every day to quell playground violence and a systematic procedure to handle and prevent violence should be adopted by the department. He said an attack a week ago on a 16-year-old at Miller Technology High School near Liverpool involving a gun, and students wielding wooden chair legs, showed the incidence of youth gang-style violence was getting out of control and threatening the effectiveness of schools.

History with Blinders

Japan's Supreme Court backs censorship of textbooks Time, 29th March 1993

When Japanese historian Saburo Ienaga sat down more than three decades ago to write a high school textbook, he wanted his readers to get a complete, accurate picture of their country's not always glorious past. For example, he chronicled how the government maintained public support during World War II. "The war was glamorised as a holy war," Ienaga wrote, "and the defeats and atrocities of the Japanese military were completely concealed." Japanese students never read that passage, or nearly 290 others that were deleted or rewritten by a government screening committee. Instead of accepting this mutilation of his work, Ienaga filed a lawsuit, charging that the textbook,guardians had violated the constitutional right to freedom of education. Ienaga, now 79, kept the legal battle going for 28 years, but has lost the final round. The Supreme Court ruled that the state has the right to determine textbooks' content to ensure "neutral and fair" teaching.

Elitist schools may hurt gifted pupils

Sydney Morning Herald 16th April 1993 Sian Powell

A British educationalist has cast doubt on the value of two of NSW's major programs for teaching gifted and talented children. A specialist in gifted education, Dr David George, said he did not believe in segregating gifted and talented children into special classes or schools - a system he referred to as "elitist" - because their emotional and social development may suffer. He also warned of the dangers, for similar reasons, of accelerating children through classes.

These two strategies are major planks of the NSW Department of School Education's gifted and talented education policy.

The Minister for Education, Mrs Chadwick, increased the number of opportunity classes in NSW from 30 to 80 this year. The number of selective high schools has grown. Acceleration, too, has been introduced in many schools.

Dr George, the keynote speaker at a conference organised by the NSW Association for Gifted and Talented Children, said acceleration was the most popular educational strategy for gifted children, simply because it was "easy and cheap".

"No child grows exponentially," he said. "They grow in fits and starts. Be careful. What would happen if we pushed a girl up two years - grade-hopping, as the Americans call it - what would happen if she then had a crash? You could do untold damage." Dr George also doubted the value of special classes and selective schools. "On the whole, I don't believe in segregating children into special schools ... because education is about socialising children, not just educating them".

School parent power

Call for voice on principals The Courier-Mail 17th April 1993 Peter Morley

Parents may be given a say in the selection of principals in Queensland's state schools. The proposal, which follows a decision to test parental involvement in the running of schools, is being considered by Education Minister, Pat Comben. And in a display of parent power yesterday, Brisbane's MacGregor High School community won a battle to keep principal David Edwards, who was appointed from the start of this year by a panel of four senior educators. His appointment had been overturned on 5th April in favour of former acting principal David Sutton, who appealed to a one-person tribunal from the Public Sector Management Commission. The appeal process did not give enough weight to the views of a school community, they said. Mr Comben welcomed the end to the impassive but told school representatives yesterday afternoon that he did not appreciate their attempts to subvert the independence and fairness of the appeals system. "The whole process of selecting a principal will now have to be repeated," Mr Comben said. "Mr David Edwards will become the acting principal in the interim."

All at C over exam grading

Sydney Morning Herald 17th April 1993
Sian Powell

The letter C is imbued with a whole range of meanings in the world of education. In the Victorian Summary Statement of Grades, a C denotes 5 - a middling mark. In the Western Australia Information Sheet, on the other hand, a C stands for "sound achievement", in a scale which runs from A to F (but avoids the letter E). In the South Australian Year 12 Certificate of Achievement, C denotes a "competent" student. But in Tasmania, the C is far more laudatory, awarded as a "credit" to the top 5 per cent to 20 per cent of candidates. In the ACT, a C is "clearly satisfactory", followed by D, "limited but satisfactory", and E, "very limited". In NSW, of course the system is far too complicated for mere letters, and even numbers become elastic in the scaling process. Pity then the employer who is faced with applications from students all over the country and has to compare nine different forms of certification. (South Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory have two leaving certificates). To shed some light on the murky world of matriculation, the Federal Department of Employment, Education and Training funded a 48-page booklet which explains the various forms of certification for bemused employers. *Leaving School 1992: A Guide to Year 12 Certificates and Tertiary Entrance statements in Australia* explains exactly how the various systems work. For instance, courses may be units in some States and subjects in others. A syllabus is a syllabus in most of the country except Victoria where it is a study design. Every State has a school year divided into four terms, except Tasmania, where it is divided into three. University requirements are called tertiary entrance ranks in NSW and the ACT, tertiary entrance scores in Victoria and Western Australia, higher education entrance scores in South Australia, and overall positions in Queensland. It would be far simpler to have some form of national certification but responsibility for education is constitutionally vested in the States, and they all prefer their own methods. The new Federal junior Minister for Education, Mr Free, said the problem with leaving certificates could be compared with the problem over railway gauges and the problems with plumbers' qualifications. It all stemmed from Federation, he said. "But there's been a slow but consistent nudge towards greater national consistency," he said.

Murphy's baby: Was Quayle right?

The Sun-Herald 4th April 1993 Frank Waller

In the US the rates of divorce and children born to single mothers have soared. In the post-war generation 80 per cent of children grew up in two-parent families. Now half of all marriages end in divorce and less than half of all US children will get through childhood without their parents splitting up. One in four children is now born to a single mother.

The studies show children in broken families or with single mothers do worse on several measures of well-being than children in intact families. "Children in single-parent or step-parent families are more likely than children in intact families to be poor, to drop out of school, to have trouble with the law - to do worse, in short, by most definitions of well-being." A few findings from latest studies:

* Kids in single-parent families are up to three times more likely to have emotional or behavioural problems.

* Kids from broken families are less successful as adults, particularly in love and at work.

* Divorce almost always brings a decline in the standard of living for mother and children. Half the single mothers in the US live below the poverty line.

* 70% of all juveniles in reform schools come from fatherless homes. A wide body of research shows kids from broken homes are more likely to commit crime.

Barbara Whitehead certainly leans towards the conservative and tends to blame single mothers for their own situation. She acknowledges the vast majority of adults say they are happier and better off after the divorce but "what contributes to a parent's happiness may detract from a child's happiness". "All too often the adult quest for freedom, independence, and choice in family relationships conflicts with a child's developmental needs for stability, constancy, harmony and permanence in family life," says Whitehead. Something has certainly gone deeply wrong in American society. Crime is soaring and getting more and more violent. Education is in a pitiful state. Many are without health care. Average wages are declining. One in five children live below the poverty line.

Kindles to test learning skills

Sydney Morning Herald 26th March 1993
Richard Macey

All kindergarten pupils will be screened from next year to identify children with problems that may hamper their education. The plan was revealed yesterday when the Minister for Education, Mrs Chadwick, unveiled a special education policy. She also announced that from next year new teachers would need to have completed a basic 14 week course on the special education needs of children with physical disabilities, learning difficulties and behavioural disorders.

New graduates who had not completed the course, now taught in NSW universities, would not be given teaching jobs.

She said annual spending on special education would rise from $100 million to $120 million. The Department of School Education's director of special education, Dr Loretta Giorcelli, said the policy would assure parents that NSW had not joined what she described as a world trend to integrate all children with disabilities into regular classes. "In other States and in other countries, in the last couple of years, there has been a shutdown of special schools," she said.

"There has been a lot of political and parental anxiety about any change in direction from the Liberal Government."

She said NSW had 4,000 children with various disabilities attending special schools, 10,000 children in special education classes attached to regular schools and another 108,000 receiving special assistance so they could attend regular classes.

"The parents of those 10,000 children and those 4,000 felt those "special ed" options were going to be closed down," Dr Giorcelli said. "In Victoria, that has happened. In Queensland, there is an enormous push. In Italy, they have shut down all their "special ed" facilities ... every child is in a regular class whether he or she can cope or not." Dr Giorcelli said parents of children with disabilities had felt threatened and wanted NSW to declare its stand. "It is not baby-sitting, it is not childminding, it is education". She said the policy still allowed, where appropriate, shifting children with disabilities towards conventional classes. Dr Giorcelli said screening kindergarten children would involve teachers "observing" pupils for early signs of learning problems. Kindergarten pupils would be checked for basic early literacy skills, such as knowing the front of the book from the back and knowing that print goes from left to right. They would also be screened to determine how well they could follow instructions and if they understood the concept of numbers. The senior vice president of the NSW Teachers' Federation, Mr Denis Fitzgerald, said he had feared NSW was moving towards "mindless integration" of children with disabilities into regular classes. He believed the trend had more to do with economics than good education.

Honesty the best policy

Sunday Telegraph 21st March 1993 Sue Quinn

Parents who fail to tell children about their impending separation could create a shock similar to that caused by the death of a loved one, according to a new program in NSW schools. The separation and divorce program, designed to help students suffering because of a marriage break-up, urges parents to be totally honest about all aspects of separation.

The resource package includes lessons for use during personal development classes, a booklet for parents and statistical information. Developed by the School Education Department and piloted last year, the program has been so popular it is now likely to be used more widely in NSW schools. The program's handbook lists the questions children most often ask when told their parents are about to separate. Most importantly, the handbook emphasises the need for the children to be told that they are not responsible for the divorce and that both parents still love them. The booklet discusses other issues related to the separation, including access by the non-custodial parent and common reactions by children after the separation. It says children often feel "an overwhelming sense of loss", confusion about their future relationship with their parents and fear that they will be abandoned. The program advises parents not to be derogatory about each other and to try to understand when a child appears to favour one parent over the other at different stages. The classroom lessons take students through the issues involved in separation and divorce, and stress the inevitability of change.

The lessons examine the various ways children react when their parents split up and encourage them to think about the positive aspects of that change. They point out that while it is common for children to fantasise about their mother and father getting back together, the reality is that this doesn't usually happen. But students are encouraged to realise that separation does not mean that parents and children stop seeing one another and doing things together.

Study finds university courses often useless

The Daily Telegraph Mirror 8th May, 1993

Sydney: University courses are out of step with the real world and need urgent fine tuning according to a report released yesterday. The findings were from a nationwide study into the relationship between higher education and the business world. Among the most damning facts to emerge was the perception that many of the lectures had little to do with real workplace situations. Students were also highly critical of lecturers who had not worked outside the education sector.

The report, titled *Graduating to the Workplace*, was carried out by the Business and Higher Education Round Table group whose members include university vice-chancellors and business chief executives. The survey canvassed 535 business and commerce students from nine tertiary education centres across Australia. It found that more than 30 percent of students considered they had achieved a poor or very poor standard of training from their faculties. About 85 percent said a greater emphasis should be placed on providing on-the-job work experience. Round Table president Eric Mayer said yesterday the survey highlighted an alarming need for consultation between business and education leaders.

Schools to Ban Violent Students

The Daily Telegraph Mirror 11th May, 1993 Education Reporter - Megan Howe

Principals will be able to exclude violent senior students from high schools under moves revealed yesterday to cut the number of serious attacks and brawls in State schools.

Software helps lift literacy

The Australian 20th April, 1993 Trudi McIntosh

Visiting US educational software expert Ms Sharyn Fitzpatrick....marketing director, corporate communications, for The Learning Company, a leading Californian-based publishing pioneer in children's educational software told *The Australian* "The biggest growth area for us has been in home based education"..... The Learning Co, which distributes many of its titles in Australia through Data-flow, is widely regarded in the US for its high quality software programs designed to enhance the analytical and creative skills of children and young adults from three to 17.

Is Education Working? Or will schools fail the test of the future?

The Courier-Mail 27th March, 1993 Melissa Ketchell and David Fagan

Schools in the 1990s have been given the impossible task-to teach a generation skills that will help them use knowledge not even invented yet. And they're not winning much applause for it. Change itself, the push to succeed and the number of students staying at school rather than joining the dole queues, have put the education system under pressure.

Some classrooms are bursting at the seems, trying to hold the senior school students who would leave in normal economic conditions. Teachers complain that their time is stretched thin, giving them little chance to upgrade their skills.

And overhanging all this is the constant squeeze on funds. Schools - like hospitals, prisons, roads and railways - have to queue for their share of the tax pool. Education is one of the biggest financial commitments governments make to their taxpayers. In Queensland last year, $2.8 billion was spent on education, making the Education Department the state's biggest public sector spender. The money paid the way for the 547,300 students in the state's school system.

Nationally money for schools and education is increasing as Australia pushes to become the 'clever country' of the Asian region, building on an advantage it already has..... Employers complain that students fresh from school don't suit their needs. A recent Queensland Confederation of Industry survey found 86 percent of bosses did not think schools were producing students suited to industry. A similar poll five years ago produced the same result. Survey respondents repeated their view that schools should teach more basic skills - not just English and mathematics, but work-related subjects. One employer said: "I find it incredible that after 12 years of school students are still classified as unskilled Labor."..... QCI general manager Clive Bubb said the survey results showed a frustration with a system which did not accommodate the different needs of academic achievers and those who would go strait to work. "Essentially what they are saying is that the system should stream out those who are not going to follow an academic career and give them some different skills" .Barry Maranta, a businessman, former educator and textbook writer, looks with dismay at his time in the education bureaucracy and it results. "I was part of the social science revolution in schools in the late 1960's and 1970's and I look back with remorse because what seemed right then isn't right now.".....Ask the academics if there is a problem and they say society merely expects more and leaves fewer options for poorly skilled people.

In the past the less-bright students found a job in the family business or joined a factory production line. Those jobs are drying up and by the time children who are starting high school now are ready to enter the workforce, the technology they are learning will have been superseded. Many of the jobs they will be doing simply don't exist yet. Academics agree the emphasis needs to be on developing a lifelong love of learning rather than memorising particular facts and bodies of knowledge which will soon be outdated. Many are opposed to what they see as a growing trend of linking educational objectives to the economy - a trend which has seen federal influence in education growing steadily since 1973.

A paper to be published in September, written by the University of Queensland's

Paige Porter, Bob Lingard and John Knight, claims the logic behind all of these reforms has been the Federal Government's will to link education and the economy. Everyone agrees the education system needs to change but amid a series of state - by-state curriculum reviews, training committees and proposed national strategies and competencies there is confusion about how.

Queensland has taken up the lead set by the US and Britain in a move towards school-based management or devolution.....

Dean of Education at Griffith University, Professor Phil Meade, said surrounding communities could be one of a school's greatest assets. More interaction between business and parents made it easier for students to make the transition from school to the real world. He is confident the system will work but recognises that principals need money they can spend on specific school tasks. "There's a chance that in the long term we will end up with a better system. The present system of people in head office in Brisbane deciding what should be taught in Mount Isa doesn't have any hope of working" Professor Meade said.

Harassment leads to school violence

Sue Quinn Telegraph Mirror May 1993

Sexual harassment in Australian schools is rife and can lead to violence, a new study shows. Kerry Robinson, lecturer in sociology at the Uni. of Western Sydney has compiled the study after surveying more than 400 students and teachers in Tasmania and NSW......By sexual harassment I mean physically abusing women and sexually abusing them right through to basic assault...... Mrs Robinson said that in one sample 27 out of 30 teachers felt that they had been sexually harassed and 23 of those had been harassed by students......

School mourns tragedy

Pauline Ray Parramatta Advocate May 1993

Police are interviewing students at Crestwood High School in Sydney after the death of a student from his injuries after a school fight.

To order the wall poster of program times or any of the support material visit your local ABC Shop, newsagent or phone or write to Ashton Scholastic
P.O. Box 630 Gosford 2250
Ph 008 800 150

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Resources Information

Adventuring with Children The Complete Manual for Family Adventure Travel, by Nan Jefferey. This family has been travelling adventurously worldwide with their 13 year old twin homeschooled sons for the past 13 years. The book is $US 14.95 Contact Kevin Jefferey P.O. Box 3010 Rt 6A Barnstable, Mass 02 630. US.

Aerogramme is the newsletter of Alternative Schools all over the planet from Australia and Russia to Denmark and America Address 417 Roslyn Rd Roslyn Heights NY 11577 PH 0011 1 (516) 621 2195 Fax 0011 1 (516) 625 3257.

Australian Reading Association is holding its first conference in Melbourne on July 5-9 The theme is 'Literacy for the New Millennium' Contact conference organiser 03 819 3700.

The **Backyard Scientist** is the other name of a fabulous lady called Jane Hoffman who has developed resources and materials that bridge the gap between knowledge and the learning process by featuring hands-on experience of scientific principles using every day items that children might find in their homes. There are 5 books in the series, each costs $US 9.50. For more information write to Backyard Scientist P.O. Box 16966 Irvine, CA 92713 U.S.A.

If you wish to receive the **Bennelong Program** from the Sydney Opera House write asking for it to GPO BOX 4274, Sydney NSW 2001.

Board of Studies Education Resources Guide is available from them on 02 925 8111. Products they sell include HSC past papers the K-6 Science and Technology Teaching Kit, Personal Development, Health and Physical Education 7-10 Teaching Kit. Australian Geography 7-10 Teaching Kit etc.

Campus Review is a newspaper of Higher Education News that considers the funding, political, practical and reform issues that are affecting the universities. Subscription $100 for 48 editions to Locked Bag 19, Post Office, Paddington 2021.

Computer Shopper is a new magazine that advertises new and used products to do with computers Their address is PO Box 34 Geelong 3220 ph 052 823742 Fax 052 82 3958.

ConTACT is a newsletter of the Continuum Concept Network and is based on the work and writings of Jean Liedloff, author of The Continuum Concept subscription is $25.00 per year to Bethany Alldridge 529 North St. Albury 2640

Co-op Bookshop is a chain of over 40 bookshops backed by sophisticated computer networking. ".... it is a true co-operative, so as profits increase so have the discounts.." When purchasing through the Co-op you get 13% off all books paid for by cash or cheque and 10% off all books paid for by Bankcard, Visa or Mastercard. There are agencies for the Co-Op Bookshop on many University and College Campuses.

Dataflow and New Horizons Computer Catalogue These two companies have combined their services to produce a huge catalogue of educational and all other programs for computers, including an insert called 'Take the Stress out of Science Software'. For more information contact New Horizons on 008 023 069

Environmental Education Material from the Association of Liquidpaperboard Carton manufacturers P.O. Box 2572 Nth Parramatta 2151 02 630 8488.

Farm Barn is an educational programme at Golden Ridge Animal Farm for Primary aged children at 686 Old Northern Rd Dural phone 867 5174.

FaxMaths is a service by an experienced teacher , Peter Ooi (B.Sc, Dip Ed) who is currently teaching at South Sydney High. After purchasing an initial 20, $1 units you can fax him any problem and he will answer it and return it to you. Fax 02 316 4996 Phone 02 666 3331.

Flashcard System for Windows is marketed by You and Me Products PO Box 61488, Vancouver WA USA 98666 pH 0011 1 (206) 5742689. It is a computer program tool designed to help 5 to 8 year olds learn elementary mathematics. (Editor's Note: They have sent me a 5 and a quarter inch disk of this shareware to try out. As I do not have a machine that takes this size disk others may like to try and review it for me. Please be aware that being American it may well be in imperial rather than metric.

Growing Up is the newsletter of the Christian Community Schools P.O. Box 159 Wentworthville 2145 Ph 636 9944. These people make Christian materials for their schools and they are available, after a registration fee, for purchase by homeschoolers. Send a large 85c stamped envelope requesting the catalogue of their materials.

Homework is the excellent and good looking networking newsletter of the Canberra Home Education Network. If you live in the ACT it would be sensible to subscribe for $7 per annum by cheque or money order to Vanessa Corrigan, 23 Bardolph St Bonython 2905.

Kindifarm - Mobile Animal Farm Hands On Science and Technology 56 Kitchener St. St Ives NSW 2075 02 449 1122

Mathematical Society The 37th Annual Conference of the Mathematical Society is being held at the University of Wollongong on July 5-9. If you would like to attend contact Dr G.H Williams at the University.

Ashton Scholastic print a catalogue called **'Modern Languages Catalogue'** which lists all the magazines they publish in foreign languages as well as audio and video tapes and resource materials for language teaching.

Moore Foundation Basic Curriculum Guides

Their basic curriculum guides come in three levels ages 5-8, 9-12 and 13-18. Each one is packed full of information about the Moores' books and materials and how to use them, suggestions for service and work projects, plus a long term research unit study. A guide costs $US 10 The Moore Foundation Phone 0011 1 206 835 2736, or write to Box 1 Camas WA 98607

MUSEUM CALENDAR OF EVENTS - ALL STATES All museums around the country have a calendar of events that it is really worth getting sent. Interesting speakers often come to share information at the museums and for a very small fee you and your family can meet and talk to scientists at the forefront of science and technology.

Open Learning is a university sponsored "at home" study program that enables people to study for pleasure or to gain advanced qualifications using notes and lectures that can be watched on ABC TV. The cost of each unit is $240. There is no real age limit on this study. If you wish to find out more ring the Unilearn Open Learning Student Advisers on 03 655 8955 or fax your inquiry to 03 655 8966.

Plain Talk About Spanking is a booklet printed by Parents and Teachers Against Violence in Education and presents some very interesting information about this topic from PTAVE P.O. Box 1033 Alamo, CA 94507-7033.

If you have a child (Yr 5 on) who is interested in things mechanical the magazine **Popular Mechanics,** available from newsagents is an interesting way to extend knowledge and keep abreast of technology.

Power Station at Mt. Piper (off the Mudgee Road past Wallerawang Power Station). Excellent visitors centre with lots of "hands on" exhibits. Power station tour available complete with hard hats and guide. "sample bag" provided, overflowing with factual information from Faraday to solar power.

Raconteur is the name of a non-competitive game that has no violence and involves players taking turns and employing their creativity using the right side of their brain. It puts children and adults on an equal footing because no-one is locked out by information that they may not have. The game sells for $30 at Dymocks stores.

Sydney Conservatorium of Music has a preparatory division called 'The Young Artists Program'. To gain entry to this program you have to audition (up to 18 yrs of age). The flyer says applicants need to be "Young Musicians with determination and commitment to study at a high level whilst coping with the demands of a normal school and home life. There are two semesters a year and successful applicants receive weekly instrumental lessons from Conservatorium teachers and a carefully structured complimentary course of 3-4 hours which will include music skills, chamber music, concert practice and performance platform. If you would like to find out more about this program please contact the Conservatorium on 02 230 1222.

The Home Schooler is an Adventist homeschooling quarterly publication costing $10 from Beverley Hogg "Truro", Pleasant Hills NSW 2658.

Third Home Education Network (THEN) is a newly formed homeschooling network. Application for association with this network which distributes a newsletter among members and offers meetings, news, activities for children, support and resources in Queensland and around the country contact THEN at PO Box 822 Beenleigh 4207 Australia.

Tropical Butterfly House Sydney is at 628 Old Northern Rd Dural. Ken Hargraves has 300 types of butterflies maintained at a constant Cairns temperature of 27 degrees. Ph 02 651 1868.

The **University of NSW** runs the **"Challenge Program"** for Gifted and Talented Students in Years 7-10. It features a variety of workshops from a range of disciplines presented by academics from the U.N.S.W. The level of work is rigorous and challenging. the cost of the two-day program is $200.

Young Writers of the Year Competition is an interesting project that high schooled homeschooled children might like to become involved in. I received the application form addressed to Homeschoolers Australia so I cannot see why homeschoolers would not be eligible around the country. Entry forms can be obtained from the Canon Office in your state or Dymocks Bookstores.

Help !!

I was recently informed about a booklet called Go Sydney! 100 excursions in the Sydney region published by Hop-Ed publications. If anyone knows the address of this group could you please contact me with it. Thanks.

Homeschool Support Groups

(Real Networking not just talking about it)
If you would like your group added please send details.

New South Wales

BONDI

Jennie Mullins

I have a ten year old and am trying to follow an unstructured, non-textbook approach. Phone 389 7249

BURWOOD

Lyn Keen Russell Lea

The Homeschool Network organises a monthly meeting at Woodstock Community Center Contact Lyn Keen for more details 02 713 2584.

DOLL'S POINT

Debbie Armanious Dolls Point

South side meetings are usually held on the first Thursday of the month at Peter Depena Park at Doll's Point, meeting from about 11am. Often there is a special activity so it is a good idea to make contact before attending for the first time. Contact Debbie Armanious 529 2032.

ERSKINE PARK

Fiona Manuel St Mary's

A NEW homeschool meeting for those with children 6 and under September 28th at Erskine Park Community Center cnr Peppertree and Swallow Drive - a really lovely indoor facility that caters for kids and has tea making, tables and chairs. Cost $2 per family from 10 - 2pm. Contact Fiona Manuel on 623 3257 for more information and to RSVP.

KELLYVILLE/HILLS DISTRICT SYDNEY

Jo-Anne Beirne Kellyville

There is a meeting held at Kellyville Park, Memorial Drive Kellyville usually on the second last or last Tuesday in the month. June 29th, July 20th, August 24th, September 21st, October 26th, November 30th. Please RSVP if you are coming to these meetings to Dodie Conway 639 4858. Cancelled in case of rain. These are relaxed, picnic meetings (bring lunch) with a wide range of sports activities for children of all ages skipping, running races, soccer, elastics, face painting. etc. Books from the John Holt Bookstore available for viewing. Discussion and interesting interactions, open meetings with no particular religious affiliations Usually plenty of older children attend.

KURING-GAI CHASE NATIONAL PARK

Robyn Wigmore Forestville

Meeting at the Kalari Visitors Center. Second or last Tuesday in the month contact Robyn Wigmore 451 5671

LANE COVE/DENISTONE

Chris Puffett Epping

A support group meeting is usually held on the third Thursday of the month in Lane Cove National Park, Lady Game Drive, Chatswood. (In June at Darvall Park Denistone). These are usually relaxed gatherings where the parents chat and the children play. Families start arriving from about 11am, and there is opportunity for general discussion around midday. Bring your picnic lunch and a chair or rug. Contact Chris Puffett, 876 5914, or Elizabeth Orr 874 6900 in case of rain or change of venue, these meetings not held during school holidays.

MACARTHUR REGION

Heather Huxley Leppington

I'm writing with regard to updating information on our Macarthur region support group. Sue Dowey has abdicated as convenor and I have been duly volunteered - which I am happy to do for a 12 month period, phone 606 5670.

MOSS VALE

Regular support group meetings contact Sue McAulay 048 681094 or Margaret Stone 048 682 959

NORTH ROCKS/CARLINFORD

Marj Taberner 8681828

NORTH SHORE/EASTERN SUBURBS

Barabara Braathen Naremburn

I am starting a science club here for the North Shore & Eastern suburbs of Sydney if anyone would like to join me for semi-regular meetings possibly at the Trumper Pavilion in Chatswood. It is within walking distance from the station. The aim of this support group is to share resources, philosophies, literature, science materials and some social contact for ourselves and our children. Contact me on 436 2057 for more details.

STANMORE

Colleen Strange facilitates an inner city homeschooling group at Maudrell Park Stanmore contact Colleen on 02 569 3381.

TOONGABBIE

Diana Green Toongabbie

Angela Griffiths was the Toongabbie contact person previously, however she is moving to Canberra and I am the new contact person for this area, if anyone would like to attend a support group meeting please contact me on 636 4748

WAHROONGA

Esther Nott Wahroonga

I am happy to have my name and particulars as a support for orthodox Catholic homeschoolers - 21 Edwards Road, Wahroonga NSW, phone 487 2975.

WINMALEE

Kassandal Toohey on 047 543301, fortnightly get togethers for homeschoolers in the Blue Mountains.

WOLLONGONG

Sue Elvis Unanderra

We have a great support group meeting at the Library in Wollongong where about 8 families meet now. Robyn Brodal is the contact on 042 840512. I would be happy to talk to people about homeschooling if they want to contact me 042 729 120.

COUNTRY NSW

ARMIDALE

Janelle Hardy Armidale

Thanks for all your good advice on Sunday! As a result, I rang the library in town here who were very good. They said if I recommend a number of books, that the will look at getting as many as finances allow. I feel I could then say "There is ..... at the library, grab that", and people who are interested can do their own research! Please put my name on the list as a contact for this area - I am more than happy to do that too - PO Box 210, Armidale, 2350, phone (067) 78 1145.

BATHURST

Marcelle Foundling, Bathurst

Our group is growing here. We have a regular meeting in the park, all welcome. Please contact me for more details 063 322 132

BROKEN HILL

Kylie Green Broken Hill

I am really happy to make contacts in our area 080 874 965. Address 86 Williams St Broken Hill 2880

CENTRAL COAST

KURRI KURRI

Carol & Greg Tisdell Kurri Kurri

You asked in your previous journal for anyone who was working as a support group or individual contact. My husband, Greg and I are quite happy to talk to other home schoolers or answer any questions of prospective home schoolers. Greg is a computer consultant and a computer teacher at TAFE so if any homeschoolers have any computer questions we would be happy to help them or advise them. It's quite a long trip to Sydney for many of us, so we couldn't all get to the seminars you organised. Please tell other homeschoolers to feel free to phone us and get advice for the price of a phone call. (Fear not, we do not sell computers to the public, so we are not trying to coerce you into buying anything!) You can phone us at Kurri Computer Services (049) 37 4385.

LISAROW

Peter & Lily Nesbitt-Hawes Lisarow

Our next homeschool meeting will be held on August 7th at the Pines in Watagans Forest for a BBQ and walk. Please make sure to ring us on 043 621 473 and confirm you are coming. The following meeting will be Saturday November 13th at Pearl Beach Arborteum at 11.30 am. Again ,please ring and confirm that you are coming.

MORRISETT

Marie Laruffa Morrisett

I started homeschooling at the beginning of this year. I have three children, Jessica 8, Egan 6 and Ayla 2 1/2. So far it's going well. I'm enjoying my children and they love to be home playing and exploring around our property. We live near Dooralong on the Central Coast and as yet I haven't had any contact with other homeschoolers on the Central Coast. I am interested in getting together with other homeschoolers weekly or fortnightly so the children can play games and make friends and the mothers can exchange ideas and support each other. My phone number is (043) 55 1429. I would like to be a contact on the Central Coast. Thanks for a great publication!

COBAR

Megan and Bill Gosling

We have an 18 month old son and are really thinking about the option of homeschooling. Our phone number is 068 362 127.

FAR NORTH COAST

LISMORE

Anne Jackson Lismore

What's On - Report Lismore area meetings - first Thursday of every month. Much enthusiasm has been generated as a result of our monthly get togethers this year. February saw twenty families in contact. Some travel for up to two hours to meet and the opportunity is certainly appreciated. February - We held a music and games day. March - Each family brought a craft activity to share. April - Was suspended as many mums were doing a Spalding course (with phonics) which we felt was one of the most exciting weeks of our lives (20 adults, 8 children between 8 and 10 years). May - Novelty day - egg and spoon, 3 legged race, sack race, etc. For more details contact Anne Jackson (066) 21 5866.

SPHINX ROCK

Joanne Brugmans Sphinx Rock NSW

We have regular homeschooling education meetings and information days in our area. If anyone would like to come please contact me - Joanne Brugmans, Kyogle Road, Sphinx Rock via Uki, 2480 (066) 89 7473

MID NTH COAST

PAPPINBARRA

Mary Ann Cummins Bonny Hills

The Mid Nth Coast homeschoolers are having a picnic at Pappinbarra on June 6th. Our group consists of four families with 13 children between us ranging from 1-12 years old. My phone number is 065 854 148 if are any homeschoolers who are interested in getting together with us.

NEWCASTLE

Carolyn Arthur Beresfield

We have regular support group meetings and a local newsletter. Contact Carolyn 049 665 098

QUIRINDI

Lynda Hatfield Quirindi

I am the contact person for Quirindi Homeschoolers Group - "Castle Mountain" Quirindi NSW 2343.

SOUTH COAST

SHOALHAVEN

Peter Ryan & Suzi Krawczyk

We have a three and half year old daughter that we are intending to homeschool. We would like to have contact with people in our area 78A Budgong Rd West Cambewarra 2540

BERRY

Fiona Waite Berry NSW

I havejust started to homeschool, after considering a Steiner approach & would like to contact other people in my area Ph 044 729 120. Or write to 72 North St Berry 2535

Nthn Territory

Clare Ridsdale NT

I would love to start a support group for homeschoolers in Darwin. If anyone knows of homeschoolers in Darwin or suburbs please get them to contact me at 10 Radford Court Coconut Grove 0810.

Queensland

BEENLEIGH
Qunitessence Pty Ltd
We are organising a conference for 30th July called REFORM. Everyone is welcome and we invite people to write to us for more information P.O. Box 822 Beenleigh 4207

BULIMBA
Louisa Danen Bulimba Qld
We are currently organising a conference which will be of interest to Christian Homeschoolers in Queensland. Biblical Christian Education and Parenting Conference, 20th - 22nd September 1993, Pius XII Provincial Seminary, Approach Road, Banyo, Brisbane, Queensland. Topics to be covered include: Humanism, Who owns our Children?, More than Merely Married, What is Christian Education:, The Christian World View, A Great Start to Life, The Genesis Solution & Resources and Support. For further information, contact L & M Danen, 112a Henderson Street, Bulimba QLD 4171, or phone (07) 395 6370.

CABOOLTURE
Weekly homeschool meetings at the Osmak residence Lot 2 Caboolture River Rd Upper Caboolture contact Bob Osmak 074 967 884 for more details. For more information on networking and homeschooling in general contact The Third Home Education Network P.O. Box 822 Beenleigh 4207

CAIRNS
Monica Hudson Cairns
Cairns Homeschoolers Group currently meets on the last Sunday of each month at a place of interest. To contact Monica - 23 Toona Terrace, Redlynch, Cairns 4870, phone (070) 39 1895.

GAYNDAH (west of Bundaberg)
Chaille Clarey Gayndah QLD
As I mentioned at the Queensland conference our family organised "the window for homeschooling" for the Orange Festival. We were really pleased, it looked great and will attract a lot of attention throughout the celebrations. May Ann and all the Slack family organised a fantastic evening at the Town Hall for 250 people for the Garden Competition. The best they've ever had. Liam, our homeschooled son won the best garden by a high school student. We are planning a conference tentatively for the 8th to 10th of October possibly at Iluka gardens, an ecology center at Bugara ,east of Bundaberg (about 4 hours north of Brisbane). If anyone would like to come please contact me on 071 611137. May Ann Slack and I also have an irregular social get together as required.

MACKAY
Susanne Boughton, Mackay
Well, last Saturday we had our first home educators' family barbecue - 43 people in all, 15 adults and 28 children, 2 families unable to attend and 1 father had to work. Great day, parents enjoyed each others company, children played peacefully, not an argument, squabble or rough play. It was beautiful to see them all playing together, the big ones looking after the smaller ones, playing brandings with a disposable cup so the little ones wouldn't get hurt and could keep up. The cubby house was overflowing with no pushing or shoving and everyone taking turns on the bikes and swings. The food was a feast and everyone is looking forward to the next one.

SUNSHINE COAST
Sunshine Coast Home Education Camp Contact Maggie Purcell 40 Browns Rd Belli 4562 Ph 074 470227 for more details.

Sth Australia

Lenore Stiggants Kyancutta
Please list me on your contact list (086 81 2038). We are enjoying homeschooling immensely but feel like outcasts in the community.

Beverley Paine Yankallila
We would like to make contact with other homeschooling families PO Box 371 Yankalilla 085 583212

Victoria

AERG
Regular Friday meetings at the Alternative Education Resource Group office 39 William St Hawthorn.

West Australia

ESPERANCE
Robert Robins Esperance WA
I would like to start a support group in my area P.O. Box 1644 Esperance 6450. Ph 090 713 296.

DENMARK
Gina Wright I am planning to travel around Australia with my two children and would like to meet and stay with homeschooling families. My mail will be sent on so please write to me at 87 Scotsdale Rd Denmark 6333

PERTH
Susan Warner GREENMOUNT
We have regular homeschool support meetings and seminars for new homeschoolers at alternating venues. If people would like to contact me on 09 2944553 or Gaye Englund on 09 381 3949 , we can put them in contact with other homeschoolers.

PORT HEDLAND
Jessi Seller Box 2176 South Hedland. WA
If anybody else happens to do Home Ed. in Port or South Hedland could they please write to me.

SAWYERS VALLEY
Leonie Westenberg 25 Kirkstall Way Sawyers Valley WA 6074 09 295 3373

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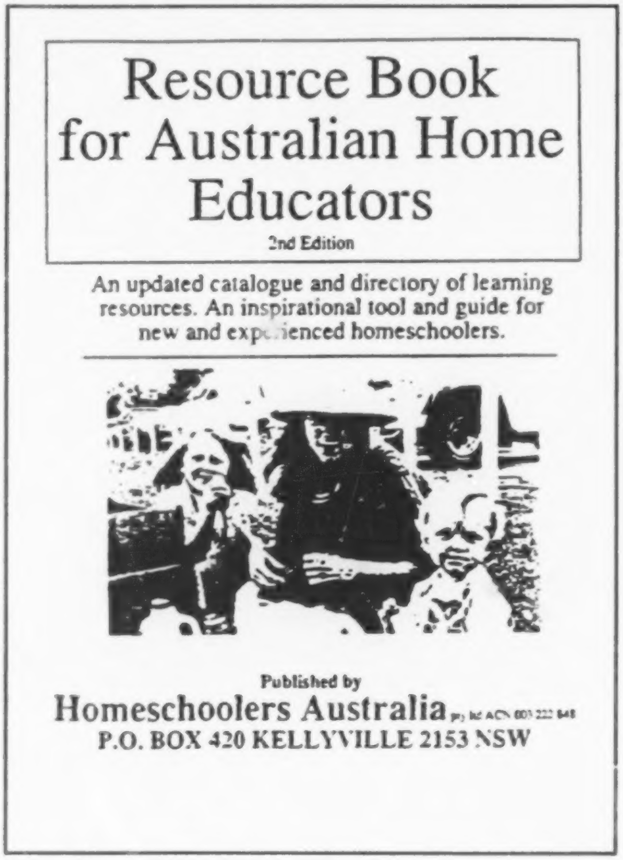

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This Resource Book does not claim to cover the depth and breadth of educational resources that are available in local and state communities, far less the national arena.

The information we have compiled is merely meant to provide a guide and an inspiration about what is possible, if we only look around. We hope we can all learn that our world is our best educational resource.

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- PARENTAL COMMITMENT GIVING INFINITE REWARDS
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- HAVING MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS & EDUCATING AT HOME
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AUSTRALIA

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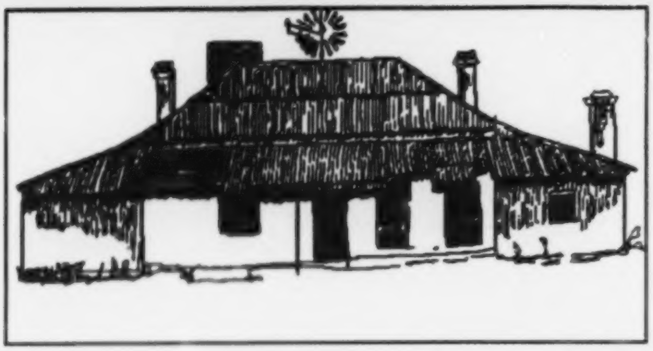
UNITED STATES

The Moore Foundation Box 1 CAMAS Washington
98607 U.S.A



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Homeschooling events

JULY 1993
Queensland

REFORM Conference 30th July Beenleigh QueenslandContact Ben Mettes at PO Box 822 Beenleigh 4207 for more information.

SEPTEMBER 1993
New South Wales

Yarrahappini Home Education Camp (Sth of Macksville) 10th September to 12th September Contact Joanne Brugmans on 066 897 473. Sphinx Rock, Kyogle Rd via Uki 2484

OCTOBER 1993
Queensland

Bundaberg Home Education Camp 8th -10th October write to MS 322 Gayndah 4625 Qld or phone 071 611137.

MARCH 1994
New South Wales

NSW Homeschooling Conference Contact Jo-Anne Beirne on 02 6293727 or write to me at PO Box 420 Kellyville 2153 for more information.

APRIL 1994
Queensland

Sunshine Coast Home Education Camp Contact Maggie Purcell 40 Browns Rd Belli 4562 Ph 074 470227 for more details.

Kellyville Homeschool Meetings 1993 organised by Greg and Jo-Anne Beirne

Kellyville Park Memorial Drive Kellyville 2153. RSVP Dodie Conway 6394858. Cancelled if raining. A wide range of sports activities for all ages. Parents participation welcomed, discussions, John Holt Bookstore books available for perusal No particular religious affiliations. Usually plenty of older children attend.

*** 29th June**
*** 20th July**
*** 24th August**
*** 21st September**
*** 26th October**
*** 30th November**

Australian Homeschool Journal

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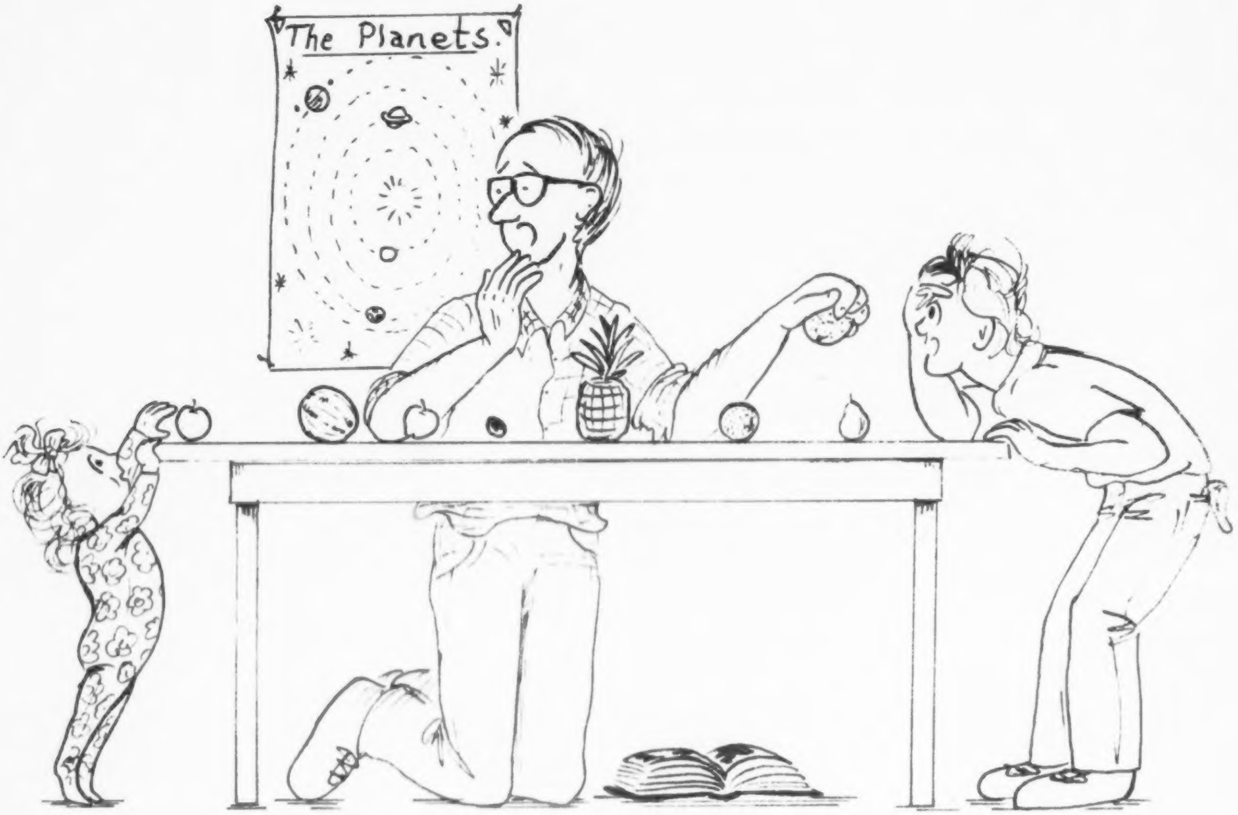

"OH NO THERE GOES PLUTO"!

PS 022117

Ideas or opinions expressed in articles and letters are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editors and publishers of this journal.

Australian Homeschool Journal

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In defence of television
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Anna Adams

About the Editor

I am a 37 year old very happily married woman, to my beloved (patient & enduring) husband Greg. We have always homeschooled our four children. Gregory 13, Rebecca 11, Stephen 9 and Mary-Beth 3 years. We try to support, encourage and challenge homeschoolers, with varying degrees of success, failure & reward. We are committed to information dissemination about the option of homeschooling so that others can learn about this important moral, social and academic alternative to traditional schooling.

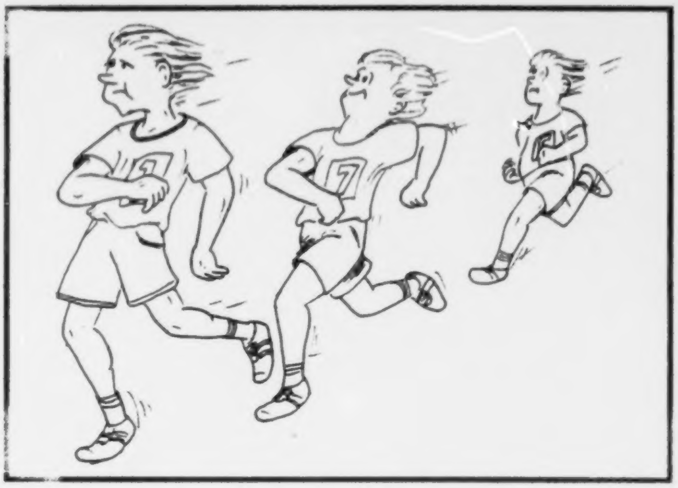
Contributions to this journal are warmly welcomed.

Networking & Support Groups

I wish to continue to update the support groups contact list. If you want to be listed anywhere in this great country, please tell us about your group.

Homeschoolers Australia P.O. Box 420 Kellyville 2153.
Thank you.

Editorial
Issue 40



Firstly I'd like to welcome Ray Ireland and his wonderful illustrations to the Australian Homeschool Journal. Ray has a wonderful touch and as a homeschooling husband of Julie, and father of four, with number five on the way, he has a good understanding of the ins and outs and ups and downs of love, life, children and homeschooling. I hope you enjoy his illustrations as much as I enjoyed getting them and putting them in. I couldn't resist the one on this page - as this just how I feel after getting out the journal! Thanks Ray!

Regarding funding. There is more food for thought in this issue and I had a good deal of feedback about Julia Boxx's article, most in strong agreement and asking "well, when are we going to do something about it?" Good question! There is really a need for a committee of sorts and anyone interested in volunteering themselves for this panel is most welcome to do so. Some people are making private initiatives already, I believe, and I would welcome them to publish anything they feel is relevant in the Australian Homeschool Journal. For the moment I would like to suggest that we prepare a discussion list and perhaps a timetable with the aim of leading into the Homeschoolers Australia Homeschooling Conference with this as one of the issues for discussion. Feedback is welcomed from anywhere around Australia!

About our Homeschoolers Australia conference, which I'm calling
'A Celebration of Homeschooling'. No we haven't as yet got a venue. It needs to be large, with rooms for small group discussions as well as a large coming together, room for a large shared barbeque, room for children to play safely, an oval as well as swing sets, rooms for other activities such as music making, puppet show, drama activities. I would like it to be a conference that the homeschooled kids as well as the parents went away from happy... so I'm still working on venue from a long list and thus the date is not yet fixed - at this stage perhaps last weekend of the 1994 Easter school holidays - if the venue is to be a school (around 4-6 April) or perhaps earlier if there are better venues.

One of the advantages of school holidays is that camping grounds around Sydney are more empty as Sydney siders leave town. Anyway I am open to suggestions. Rosemary Hafner from the Board of Studies said she will attend for a session and Sue Warner from The Home Based Learners Network in W.A. has said she will be attending! Pretty amazing Susan!

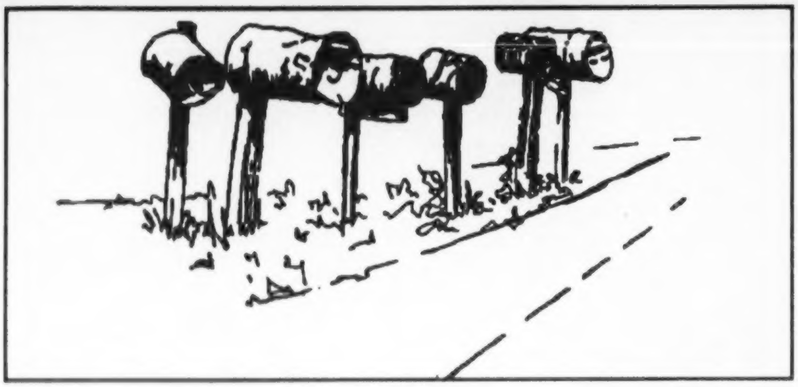
Initial suggestions for topics for discussion are science in the homeschool, university education, experiential learning, homeschooling high schoolers, music, funding, research and homeschooling......... There has also been a great suggestion that groups may want to organise a photo display of their group activites and families may want to set up a display of the written, art and craft and other work they have been undertaking at home with their children. Certainly people are always encouraged and inspired when they see what homeschoolers are doing and a display in a big hall might be a good opportunity to invite cynical relatives and friends ...... People who have volunteered so far to help with organisation include Anna Adams, Suzie Hammond, Sue Cartwright, Barbara Braathen, David Winch, Leanne Bae, Julie Ireland, Julia Boxx, Marj Taberner, Ros Lazar, Shona Sadlier and Dodie Conway. It'll be a huge job but we really want to make it a big success. If you want to help, make suggestions, or just tell us your coming please drop us a line to PO Box 420 Kellyville 2153.

Apologies for the size of print in the homeschooling and educational media sections this issue. Also humble apologies to the people who sent things that I didn't print. I just keep running out of space!

There is always going to be criticism of homeschooling, some of it justified, but in the interests of fairness the critics sometimes need to be answered. The article and my response on pages 45-47 are an attempt to do just that.

Happy Homeschooling!

Letters
Letters
Letters
Letters



NEW HOMESCHOOL MEETINGS

Barbara Braathen Naremburn NSW
The first meeting of a North Shore homeschool support group called 'The Science Club' will be held at the end of August 1993 between 10.30 am and 2.30 pm. Everyone is welcome but it will be essential to RSVP beforehand, as soon as possible to me on 436 2057. I will bring some science equipment, microscopes and resources, other families are encouraged to bring slides and anything else that may be of interest. Jo-Anne Beirne will bring materials from The John Holt Bookstore for your interest. I have booked Bales Park, Sydney St Chatswood for our intial meeting and it will cost around $4 per family (depending on attendance) as we need an indoor venue in winter. It has a hall, kitchen and a verandah looking out on to a soccer field and a safe area for young ones. Parking is available, accessed from Sydney Street. Bring something to sit on, lunch and your ideas. The first thing we will need to do is address what we want from a support group.

Janelle Hardy Armidale NSW
We are getting the word around about homeschooling and are hoping our information day in October goes well. We had an article in the "local paper" and on the T.V. (J.B. See Homeschooling Media section). Could you please note in the next journal that an Armidale and area, information day will be held Sat 23rd October, 1993 at 1.00pm, St Mark's Chapel UNE. Ring Janelle (067) 781145 for more details.

Monica Hudson Redlynch Far Nth Far North Queensland
We'll be pleased to see you Jo-Anne at the FNQ Home Educators Picnic Day on Sunday 5th September, 10am till approx 12 noon at Whyanbeel Farm and afterwards at 4 mile beach at Port Douglas. Whyanbeel Farm is a tropical flower farm. They have a large variety of tropical flowers with some very rare varieties in their collection. Cost $5 per family . They would like to know approximate numbers so please let me know by August 20th if you're coming.

Maria Sozanski Bathurst NSW
Bathurst area homeschoolers will now be regularly meeting on the 1st Thursday of every month 10.30am - 12.30pm at the West Bathurst Community House. We have also started a regular newsletter. The shared ideas, support and encouragement is great and appreciated by both parents and children. We are promoting the idea of homeschooling in the area by distributing copies of our newsletters to the local library, Women's Health Centre etc. We've invited the newspapers to photograph us at our next excursion and have been invited to speak at a Nursing Mothers Association meeting. For more information or just a chat, contact Marcelle Foundling 32 2132 or Maria Sozanski 32 3410.

Robyn Wigmore Forestville NSW
Our group is now about 10 families in all, with children ranging from 2 - 11 years of age. The "core group" all live from Chatswood to the Northern Beaches, but all our activities are open to people from everywhere (and 'extras' always come - often to escape the inner city and see the bush etc). We meet once a month but the exact date varies each month depending on the activity. Sometimes we need to fit in with guides etc so change from a Tuesday to another day. Most of our activities centre on enjoying the natural environment eg. bushland or beaches. We go somewhere different every month, usually for a bush walk, but not always. (eg recently we did a tour of the Adventist Hospital). We've been to the Kuring-gai wildflower gardens several times, Stony Range Flora Reserve, Kalkari Visitors Centre plus other bushwalks locally (Ganigal National Park). We do a few hours of walking usually in the morning and then have a picnic lunch and mums/dads chat while kids play soccer / frisbees / explore etc etc. until mid afternoon. I also wanted to let you know I rang into Brian Wiltshire on Thursday night (2GB) and spoke for 10 minutes or so about homeschooling. He was wondering why there were no 'geniuses' these days like Edison, Abe Lincoln, Van Gogh, Agatha Christie etc etc. I rang in and read the list of famous homeschoolers and suggested the school system was squashing the 'genius' out of people. He was quite taken aback! Its still scary talking on the radio but it was better than last time! (J.B. See Homeschooling Media section).

CONTACTS PLEASE

April Simon Blackheath NSW
Thanks again for your newsletter. I've been going to write a piece for you to publish but haven't got down to it yet. We are nicely settled in the Upper Blue Mountains now though know of no homeschoolers closer than Bathurst (an hour and a half away) or Springwood (40 minutes away). We would love to hear from any of your readers in this area. Greg and April Simon 16 St Elmo Street Blackheath 047 876 119

There would be a cost involved, the school literature indicates an admission fee of $7.00. It should be considered that the organiser applied for funding to keep costs to a minimum but until he can prove its worth, funding has not been given. Depending on numbers we may be able to come to an amicable arrangement for family groups. The sessions would be at night time, probably starting around 6.30pm again depending on numbers and the weather. Please contact Marion Ripolles on (02) 601-3254 or for interstate interest write to me at 15 Lang Road, Casula NSW 2170. Please notify me by the end of August. When the full itinerary is available for the tour, I will arrange to let the country and interstate homeschoolers know.

[**Jo-Anne's note**: For anyone with children interested in astronomy who live near Sydney or Parkes (or are prepared to visit) both observatories in these places provide absolutely superb resources indoors, for studying the stars. The cost is minimal and enthusiastic astronomers work with fairly small groups. Sometimes you have to book but often you can tell it is going to be a clear night and just go on the spur of the moment, phone 217 0345. Macquarie University also has two Open Days a year when their telescopes are available for public use - ring them for more details).

ABOUT SCHOOL

Aldo Ferraro Macquarie Fields

I have recently undertaken the responsibility of providing my 7 children with an education at home. As a result, I received a copy of your journal (issue 36) which I found interesting. On browsing through your journal I came upon a number of quotes made by people opposed to home schooling; especially one made by a Graham Allpin Senior Vice President of the Parents and Citizens Association where he wrongly stated "I see a very great danger in allowing unqualified parents to teach".

Up until June 1993, I had 5 children (oldest 11 years) attending school. Not mentioning the level of violence in schools, two of my children couldn't even read a Golden Book, three of my children could not do basic addition if it involved a carry, subtraction was worse; with multiplication and division considered impossible. My daughter, aged 5 started school this year. Five months later she still did not recognise any letters of the alphabet. Not even A. In the first week of home schooling, my daughter learned the entire alphabet and is now learning to spell small words. In six weeks, my oldest son has progressed to high school maths (fractions), with the others obtaining sound addition and subtraction abilities. Two of my sons (aged 10 and 9) can now read chapter books. Obviously there is more. What I am trying to say is that if it is a great danger to allow unqualified parents to teach, then what does this say for qualified teachers failing to teach?

NSW REGISTRATION PROCEDURE Don Haddon , Castle Hill

[Jo-Anne's Note: Many of you will know Don Haddon as the Board of Studies Authorised Person who patiently answered all of our phone enquiries and visited a great number of families between 1991 -1993 for the purpose of registration. Don suffered a mild stroke a couple of months ago and is now retired from The Board of Studies but maintains a healthy interest in all matters to do with homeschooling and especially the registration process. I am delighted to print his detailed response on this matter.]

In the May-June issue of Australian Homeschool Journal I was interested in the correspondence received from Gwenda Cannane, published in "Feedback Please" and I would like the opportunity to discuss some of the matters raised. I should emphasise that I do this not on behalf of the Board of Studies, but as an individual subscriber to your journal. In view of the fact that my name was published in the article, I should also point out that my comments are meant as a general response to these issues, as I do not wish to discuss the details of this particular visit. I do this, not as a defence of my actions during my time at the Board, but as an attempt to clear up some perceived misconceptions which this and other such statements may create. My major concern is that the letter states that the program presented at the visit "wasn't adequate".

Registration for homeschooling is only recommended where programs have been found to be adequate, regardless of the time recommended. The current registration procedures allow for a great deal of flexibility which previously had not existed, enabling homeschoolers to become registered at many different stages of their experience. You may recall an interview with me, published in your November - December 1991 issue of the journal, where, in response to your question regarding the difference in roles under the old legislation, I stated that (among other things) "the new role allows us (i.e. Authorised Persons) the opportunity to foster... support to families and to combine our inspection role with one of an adviser and consultant". In order to give some flexibility to the

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

THANK YOU

Tina Mucci Stanwell Park NSW

We recently received a 1 year registration from the Board of Studies for Kiara and found the whole experience very positive and encouraging. Joanne, we realise that there was a lot of "back-stage" work to get us to the point where registration for homeschooling is now such a pleasant experience. We will never know how much 'lobbying' and time people like you have invested but we'd like to thank you for helping to make it possible.

Nadia Clarke Nth Lambton NSW

Just a note to express my thanks Jo-Anne for your help and availability when needed together with practical suggestions regarding homeschooling. I never realised there were so many interesting facts and places etc. around our town to learn about. One benefit with homeschooling is being able to explore what is around. Recently Peter Hall (BOSLO) came and he was more than happy with the children's work. One of our students is in Year 8 and the other Year 5. he gave us two years registration if we wished to continue, which we are doing at present. We are planning to move to Darwin. Thank you again.

FOR SALE

Kym Lawrence Cambewarra NSW

I am writing to tell you about the ultimate homeschooling experience! We have just returned from taking our family all around Australia, we loved it but now we want to sell our vehicle. It's a Ford Transit/Independence Motorhome - six berth, toilet/shower, LPG Petrol, long wheel base, dual wheel, store/fridge, All that you'll ever need and registered to the 6/94. Price $12500. if anyone is interested please contact me at 455 Koloona Drv Cambewarra 2540.

NEW SOUTH AUSTRALIAN HOMESCHOOL ASSOCIATION

Marianne Gale, Reynella SA

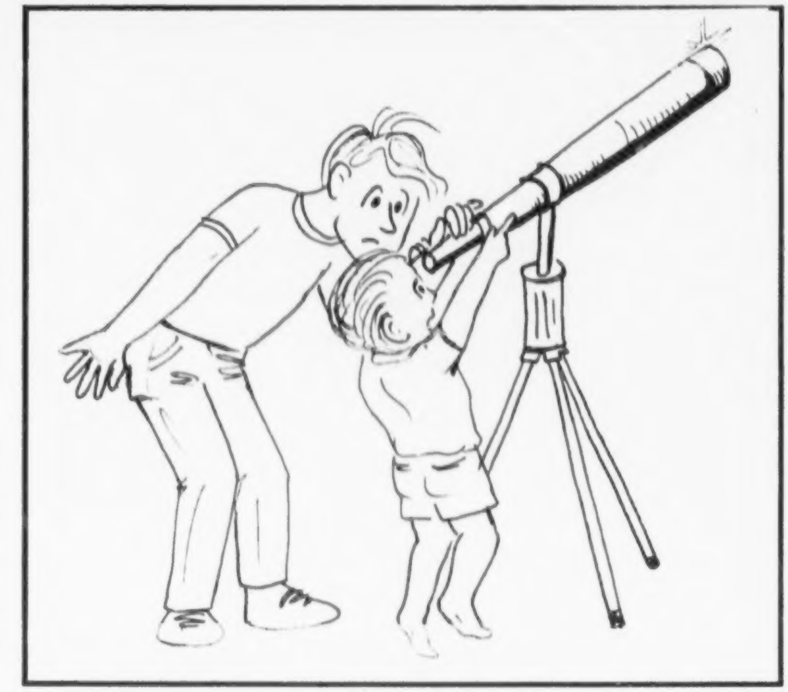
I've just had a look at your 2nd edition of the Resource Book, that had been sent to Bev Paine (I'm putting together the Home-Based Learners newsletter this year). There are a few updates for it: pg 12: my telephone no. is 08) 387 0104 pg 52: Builder Books is now: PO Box 5291, Lynnwood, WA 98046-5291 USA (they also offer volume discounts of 5% for over $50, and 10% for over $100) Also - an excellent resource for Christian homeschoolers is Cathy Duffy's Curriculum Manuals. There is an elementary manual and a jr./sr. high one. They are around US$14.95. I know that Builder Books stocks them. I guess the best description would be that they are on the same scale as Mary Pride's books. Another development - Although homeschoolers are now networking pretty well here, and Home-Based Learning has been growing, there are some of us who are starting an association. It will probably be called "Homeschooling Association of South Australia" for simplicity. The primary purpose of having an association is to help homeschooling groups to come together at times. We are aiming for the association to be 'up and running' within the next few months. My address is 11 Ross Court Reynella, SA 5161.

ANYONE FOR ASTRONOMY?

Marion Ripolles Casula NSW

'Road city astronomer' is a mobile astronomy exhibition. It will be travelling around Australia. The organiser was unaware that there was such a thing as homeschooling other than correspondence and long distance schooling, needless to say we enlightened him on the subject. The Exhibition consists of (4) Large Telescopes, with which all students and parents will be able to view the wonders of the Universe.

The Display Module has various visual and inter-active displays onboard which include:computers, photographic displays, astronomical books, educational games and VCR's which contain up to date footage on the NASA Space Programs. All students will be given a spread sheet which contains information about telescopes, The beginning of the universe, the planets and other subjects on Astronomy. Each telescope will focus on a particular object in space and everyone will have a chance to view these objects for themselves. The object of the Astronomy Exhibition is to expand the mind and to wonder about the grand design of the universe. We will have to arrange an area on the outskirts of the city to place the semi-trailer as the effect of the "corona" from the city lights, smog and pollution would impede the best view through the telescopes. The finer details have yet to be arranged and at this point, I am seeking expressions of interest to take back to the organiser in order to arrange times for homeschoolers only. You will all appreciate that it would be less than satisfactory to be herded together with school groups.



registration process, periods of from six months to two years registration are given. If a program was inadequate, registration wouldn't be recommended.

On some occasions, particularly where parents are preparing for registration for the first time, materials presented at the home visit lack the necessary detail to recommend to the Minister that two years registration should be given. In all such cases, parents are given the opportunity to discuss this during the visit, and time is spent discussing the preparation of the program which best meets the needs of the individual student. On many occasions, this support has continued throughout the registration period by means of calls to officers at the Board of Studies or to Liaison Officers based in the Regions.

Sometimes, the Authorised Person is unable to make any recommendation at the initial visit due to the fact that parents are not appropriately prepared for the visit and, after some discussion regarding the curriculum requirements, has arranged to return in a matter of weeks to conduct a further registration visit. At all times, the interests of the students and the support of the parents are major considerations in such discussions.

A recommendation of less than two years is not an expression of inadequacy, but gives the chance for parents to spend more time on their programs where they may have had to prepare quickly and with little support for the initial visit. On occasions, children with specific individual learning difficulties are visited for registration. Sometimes, these difficulties are so profound that is is impossible for the parent to provide a program which covers all stated curriculum requirements as they pertain to all key learning areas. In my experience, it has always been the policy of the recommending officers to consider the specific case in question, and to make recommendations accordingly, once again providing as much support as possible. The question of setting a program "norm" for registration is a complex matter. I believe that one of the strengths of the current system is the flexibility which is provided for parents to structure experiences which best suit their children's learning, and their own particular style of pedagogy, without having to be governed by the constraints of strict rules and regulations. The guidelines clearly set out minimum requirements. The ways in which programs are presented to satisfy these requirements are many and varied. It has been my experience that parents are able to obtain a great deal of support within the homeschooling groups and, at times, through discussion with the Authorised Person when making visits.

Finally, I should point out that Authorised Persons are not operating according to the regulations of the Board of Studies, as implied in the final statement of the article. When a registration visit occurs Authorised Persons (who are appointed by the Minister) are responding to the guidelines which have been drawn up by a group made up of officers from the Board of Studies and homeschooling parents, and approved by the Minister. Authorised Persons carry out their duties within these guidelines and make their recommendations directly to the Minister.

Whilst it is recognised that a registration visit is a stressful time for many, I believe that every effort is made to be positive and supportive during the visit. Many new homeschoolers find assistance in a follow-up visit after six or twelve months, and, at times, have been known to request this during the initial visit. In cases where parents are not certain of the directions their homeschooling experiences should take, much can be gained by recommending shorter registration periods followed by a further visit which may be used to confirm that which is being done, or to discuss experiences which may be provided to best suit the particular learning situation.

THE WAR AGAINST WOMEN

Angela Edwards Wahroonga NSW

I was wondering if you had seen the following article in The Age? It is certainly an eye-opener!

Sex Battle Lines Drawn Up in Primary Schools Caroline Milburn The Age 18 June 93

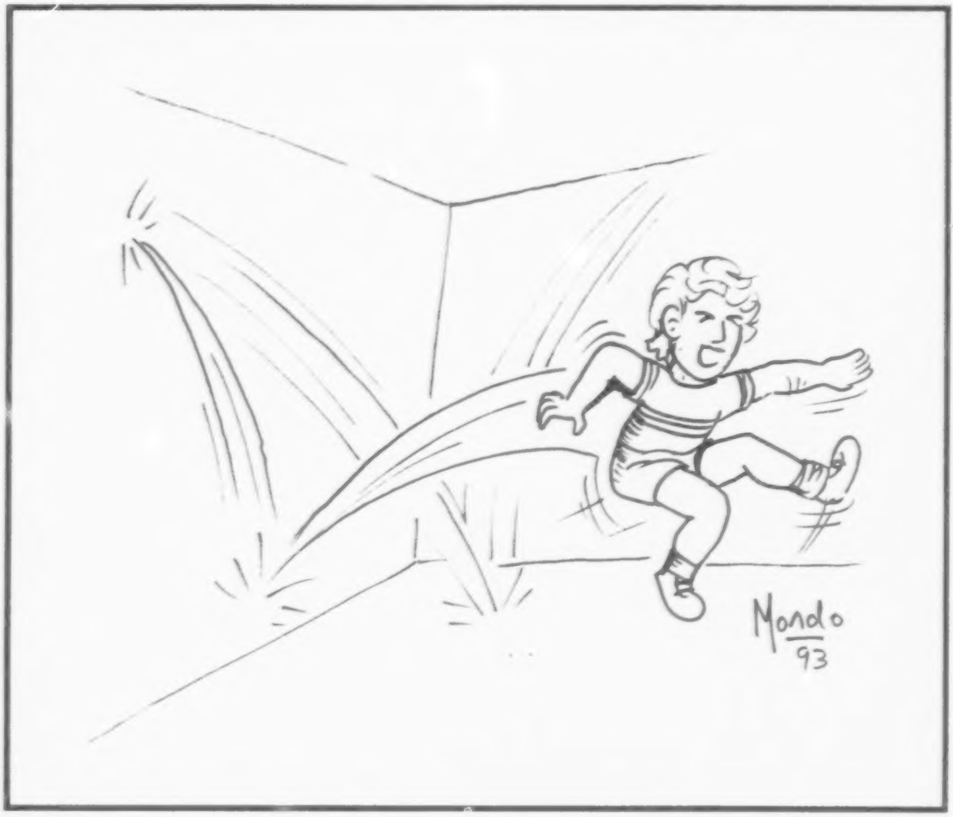
Violent sexual attitudes to girls are common among boys in primary schools, according to an unpublished survey on school violence funded by the Federal Government. Grade five and six boys dominated their school culture and used sex as a weapon to intimidate girls, the survey found. Sexual harassment was so bad at one of the five Melbourne primary schools surveyed that the teachers banned children from holding hands.

Girls at the school reported being threatened physically and verbally if they did not meet the boys' demands to tongue-kiss and touch them. When asked about violence, boys in all of the five schools responded by defining violence in sexual terms. They said violence meant "grabbing tits", "nipple crippling", "grabbing butt", "giving head jobs to boys" and "poofs". In answer to the question "what causes violence?" A boy in one discussion group said: "Watching a movie where a guy's getting on to a girl, and then you want to go out and do it, too." All of the other boys in the small single-sex discussion group agreed.

When asked to name other causes of violence, the most common responses from boys were "to be tough", "because you're horny", "sex", "anger" and "jealousy". Girls in grade five and six reported being repeatedly and severely harassed by the male students. The report said that although the girls said they felt uncomfortable and upset by such forced attention, their values reflected the dominant culture of the boys in schools. When questioned about their hierarchy of values, all the girls revealed that they wanted to have a boyfriend and be considered by the rest of the boys as the most desirable and therefore the most popular girl in school. "This, they said, would make them the most powerful girl in the school," the report said. "The most powerful boy in the school was not the most popular but the toughest"

The author of the report, Ms Christine Forsey, a project officer with the Western Education Centre, said the boys used their sexuality to intimidate other boys as well as the girls. "When the boys talked about sex, it was not in terms of love, it was in relation to violence and it was disturbing that the boys were learning from each other," she said. "They had it firmly planted in their heads that male sexual desire is something uncontrollable". Ms Forsey interviewed 145 primary students from government and non-government schools. The Federal Department of Employment, Education and Training funded the project, which was set up to examine violence in schools. Responses to questions about violence from the 10-year-old and 11-year-old students in grades five and six were similar in private and state schools.

Ms Forsey said curriculum discussions in the past year with more than 200 primary and secondary school teachers had revealed that sex-based harassment was rife in schools. The most commonly reported element of school culture was male domination by students and staff (sic). Teachers reported that boys dominated sport, computers and other equipment, classroom time and playing space in the school yard. They said girls were often withdrawn, marginalised and aimless within the school culture. Males tended to control the decision-making within the school."Go to any school yard and you will see girls sitting round in huddles or pushed to the fringe areas of the playground, " Ms Forsey said. "it's worrying because it creates and perpetuates an unequal relationship which places males above females not only in terms of their self-regard but in terms of their access and opportunities in education and life."



Ms Forsey's report has not been released because it was a qualitative study which did not survey a large group of schools. But other education sources said that it had not been publicly released because it was too controversial and painted an ugly picture of primary schools.

However, Ms Rosita Villa, an industrial officer with the Federated Teachers Union of Victoria, said the study debunked the image that primary schools were idyllic havens immune from social trends beyond the school gate. She said teachers were increasingly concerned about the overwhelming nature of sexual harassment in schools. "It is a social problem that exists in our culture", Ms Villa said. "If there's rape on the streets there's sure to be sexual harassment in the schools." A national review of school policy released last year supports Ms Forsey's findings about widespread sex based harassment of girl students. The national report, 'Listening to Girls', identified sexual harassment as a daily fact of life for Australian schoolgirls. It said girls suffered harassment from boy students and sometimes from teachers.

'Listening to Girls' was part of a review of national education policy by the Australian Education Council. About 800 schoolgirls aged from four to 18 throughout Australia were interviewed for the report and 73 schools were visited.

Feedback

This is the section where we invite you to contribute or reply to items of particular concern.

A Homeschool Computer Bulletin Board ?

Julia Boxx NSW

My husband and I have been discussing a very exciting possibility for homeschooling families. We want to put the idea to others for their consideration. Would Homeschoolers Australia or another family or group be interested in setting up a Computer Bulletin Board-with full messaging, down loading and uploading facilities? If cost was an issue (it always is I guess), perhaps a small annual fee could be levied per family or the Board might be operated on "budget time", as in 6pm Saturdays to 8am Mondays, with this perhaps being extended in future if the idea is successful over time. Such a Bulletin Board might offer the following benefits and opportunities, only some of many examples:

1. Shareware educational programs for downloading and/or uploading.
2. Networking with U.S.A. and Australian Bulletin Boards.
3. Allow a means of easy mass communication on issues needing everybody's attention and input immediately (e.g. regulation policies, funding, etc.).
4. Allow for forums and general discussion about issues of interest and ongoing concern (e.g. as above, educational, social, legal, etc.).
5. If data could be kept over time on the Board's "Usage Rates", Homeschoolers Australia would be in a strong position to approach the government (and/or other organisations) for funding of a Keylink Hook-Up for homeschoolers in future.
6. Provide greater and regular support and interaction among all families, particularly those more geographically isolated in rural areas, those with no support groups in their communities, and those unable, for any reasons to participate in support groups and shared activities.
7. Homeschooling numbers are growing markedly in rural areas. Most rural families, even without being on the mains power, have computers and modems. They are used extensively for the family business and to overcome the barrier of "isolation." They have instant access to everything via their computer and modem. Homeschooling starts to look a lot more attractive to rural Australia if a Bulletin Board is part of the support and networking system.
8. Allow for nationwide personal interaction between families, not just local or regional.
9. Provide a means of "advertising" among families about texts, equipment, resource materials, supplies for buying and selling, exchange, loan or other ways to access.
10. Allow children (and parents) to communicate with others on any areas of interest or hassle—hobbies, projects, special skills, problem areas with school work, to know more of different lifestyles/ cultures/ regions etc., jobs and work, approaches to learning and the like.
11. Emphasises to the government and the general public that homeschoolers are at the front of the line in using telecommunication systems to educate, socialise and prepare their children for life in the 21st century. Such a Bulletin Board would not be for us a "40 minute period twice weekly in a class with 30 others to meet the academic requirements of learning about computers of science and technology" whether you want to or not. Rather, it would be what it is meant to be—a real life tool for learning about things and for communicating more efficiently and effectively.
12. Enable homeschoolers to come together as a "whole group" to address and deal with issues and yet maintain each individual family's independence and freedom. In short, it could assist in giving us greater power without numbers while avoiding the "an association speaking for us all" thing.
13. Any other benefits people think of—and I'm sure there are many more!!

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A Bulletin Board would not replace any of the things we have already journal, support groups, family newsletters, homeschooling workshops or anything else. Rather it would serve as an additional resource of assistance and interaction for families. We'd be interested in peoples thoughts on this idea, or if it has been suggested or considered already. Please contact me via the mail if you are interested in doing this. Julia Boxx RMB Carcalgong via Windeyer Mudgee 2850.

Natural learning in high school ?

Bev Paine Yankalilla SA

Thank you for the newsletter, and all the effort you and your family put in. I am now studying at University full-time as an external student and my efforts in promoting the home education movement as an alternative is no longer as prominent in my life.

I am wondering if any of the readers of the Journal are offering a 'natural learning' program to 12 year olds and up. April is at this age, and I feel the pressure to offer more 'book' learning, structured activities, and would like to know how others feel about natural learning methods for teenagers. My children don't have any consuming interests or passions. We don't spend all day 'expanding' their activities, they have a lot of time to do their own thing while we do ours.(studying and building our house.) However, we are available should they need or want us for something.

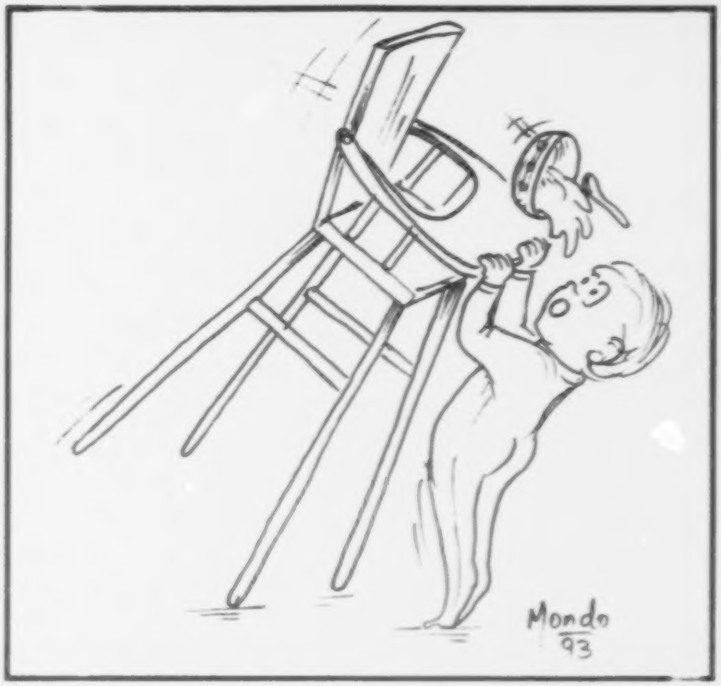
If anyone out there has an older child who has only experienced a natural learning method, especially through the early teenage years, or even a hybrid education, I would be grateful to hear from them.

Jo-Anne's reply:

(I would love to print other people's replies to this letter as well).

I found a really inspiring book about the whole idea of living, and by way of living, learning, is the Colfaxes book 'Hard Times in Paradise'. This family built their home, raised animals and indulged their children's normal interests in a totally natural way and so far three of their kids have ended up at Harvard on scholarship and two have since completed degrees.

In terms of what we do as a family, I must say that it is almost impossible to simplify down enough to fit in a space such as this. I also don't want to feel that other homeschoolers may judge or compare what they are doing with what we are doing in our household. (I know I still do it). It has always seemed to me that so much of the learning that happens in our house is intangible and unable to be neatly placed in a 'category' for evaluation. The danger then is that when it is in print someone on the outside, be it another family, a researcher or an education official gets the idea that this "program", "standard", " range of activities", "number of hours" is OK or not OK.



How do you possibly quantify and qualify what you are doing as parent, friend, teacher, mentor with your children? It doesn't just happen 9 - 3, sometimes the learning/living relationship is really intense, but most of the time as they get older, it is so close and unspoken it just happens.

There is absolutely no way to compare the way schools look at learning with the way we look at learning. Some examples: Rebecca (11) has a school friend the same age as her who has read 3 books since the beginning of the year & done 7 projects. Rebecca has done no projects but has read nearly a hundred books - our priorities and flexible lifestyle (or timetable) are a lot different to what is common in other homeschools and schools. My kids all love music and have 3 hours a week each of lessons (and much more than this of practice) by choice. I don't want any homeschooler to observe that I am doing too much music or that they in turn are doing too little music. It could easily be said that my 13 year old son is disadvantaged in that he has little idea about geology but how to weigh up and compare, and what should we compare it with? So much depends on individual's interests and priorities which makes our world such an amazing place (and our lives as homeschoolers so marvellous). This is why I strongly believe in writing and negotiating one's own educational program rather than copying someone else's or buying one.

I read recently that Doug Moran the multi millionaire owner of the hospital group left school at 11 years old, and of course many others regarded a failures at "education" have turned out successful and happy people. Of course I don't want my children to miss out on anything educationally but I realise that they cannot cover all the myriad things there is to know - so I can only give them so much and then the confidence and skills to believe that whatever it is they want to know or do they can achieve it.

When you have been homeschooling for as long as we have, you start to look at your tenager and realise just how far they have come. There are great conversations and arguments, they make so many thoughtful statements and are (usually) so responsible and self-motivated that in your heart and brain you are confident to just go with what is happening- evaluating and changing only as necessary as you go along . Gregory for example has always hated to write, his comment "But Mum I just don't write like the authors I read, mine looks so second class" has been a challenge for me on occasions, and issues such as "If he doesn't do paperwork will I be able to get registered?" (we always have); " If he doesn't practise writing will he ever get better at it?; " Am I irresponsible in not pushing him to write?" pale, when he sat down in the last two months and wrote two superb pieces using language that obviously grew from all the literature he has read over the years. My lesson of course is that he is a really wonderful and capable person, he does heaps of things extremely well, he is exposed to more writing than most people, he has a mother who writes all the time and he can in fact write when he has to, but don't expect it to happen too often.

John Holt's "trust your children" keeps coming back to my mind fortunately, and I suppose I need to tell you that I say "trust yourself" to myself on regular occasions. Someone said the other day that homeschooling is knowing when not to interfere. You get a bit more experienced at knowing what to do and when to do it and how much to do after awhile, you try to do your best, you love your kids and encourage them to seek their best and somehow this integrity bears fruit. I don't know if this is the definition of natural learning, but whatever we are doing it is working. It may look a little different from what the Paines are doing, but as long as we are committed to our children, they are content and learning, then I feel, like others do, that all is well .

Educational jargon- the pros and cons

Anonymous W.A.

May I ask for your support and advice as a fellow homeschooling mum? Today on receipt of the official documents regarding homeschooling, I realise I am at a loss as to how to fulfil their requirements. I have come to be in this position because of several values I hold dear. Such as Alternative Education to me, means something far removed from schooling as we know it and getting back to the basics. Those being family communication, love, respect, time, acceptance of each other as individuals... My values are not mainstream, in as much as I believe society is in for some drastic change and that the children of tomorrow will need skills and abilities that society (including schools and education departments) don't hold as valuable at this time. They seem to think they have a monopoly on where and how to direct our children's lives. I do believe that our children need an education but how do you get through to these people that it may not be their form of education that we believe is best, without having our kids taken from us because we don't fit into any existing mold.

I know this policy has been agreed upon by many homeschoolers. I also know that many of these are exteachers, I am not, and as such don't speak the same language or know how to test and evaluate my kids, apart from a mother's intuition that they are 'maturing nicely', this doesn't look very impressive on a report sheet. I really wonder why we have to do all the written work for the department when we know we are only going through the motions, explaining what happens everyday whether taught or not. To me it seems irrelevant to what my kids are really learning. We don't know what having a loving, secure life is teaching them, probably a lot more than we could ever write on paper.

My kids are just really content to be around our life which is sometimes interesting, sometimes not but it's real which I believe is relevant. Regarding the part of the policy called 'efficiency of planning'. I feel inadequate in this area as I have no previous training in education and cannot predict needs or levels. This definitely leaves me perplexed. Also 'the extent of consistency with the outcomes listed'. I see these outcomes displayed everyday in the way the kids express themselves and respond to people, the environment and new situations, but I am not good with paperwork and miss recording much of what is covered. One outcome I fear I will be found lacking in is 'literacy skills' because although my daughter (9yrs) reads well she dislikes to write therefore there is not a quantity of work to show. I don't think sheetwork is very good and I recall you mentioning that you didn't use spelling lists, I feel these are a very false tools in the homeschool. (I would be interested to know how your

A BOX OF QUAKKERS.

family learns because you are the first homeschoolers I know that don't follow a bought program).

I am trying to accept my children as they are but am finding this difficult when I read about the 'evidence' I have to provide. My son (6yrs) is not very co-operative when I try to teach or tell him things, he doesn't like to write regularly, he didn't even like to draw when he was younger. He reads some words with help but has no retention of sounds, he is good with shapes, memory games, numbers, music, is a mature speaker. He is a real nice person and I feel the academic skills will come with age. Am I being too optimistic? I believe the district education officer thinks so and therefore I am in need of advice. I wouldn't feel right working from a bought program as this would be just following the mold of the schools. I hope my writing to you is not a burden but I couldn't think of anyone in a better position to advise me. Looking forward to hearing from you.

Jo-Anne's Reply

Firstly I would like to refer you to an article by Gina Wright in the most recent edition of the W.A. Home Based Learners Network newsletter which explains extremely well the different approaches that some people take to home learning. Second, I need to reassure you that to my certain knowledge the great majority of parents who put in submissions for the new regulations in WA are not teachers or ex-teachers.

LEARN GREEK

The wording of the regulations you sent however is a good deal less onerous than we have in NSW where a very diverse group of people manage to function quite well using them. Because such documents are generated by the Education Department they tend to use what is called 'educational jargon'. Does this mean we have to use it too?

I believe that if you are truly convinced that you are doing the right thing for your child, then you must follow your conscience and argue your case from that basis, whether it be in educational jargon or as simply as you want to state it. That being said, I personally do believe that there are certain standards of education that it would be irresponsible, as a caring parent, not to maintain.

However your children are young and obviously it is not necessary that they have volumes of paperwork or that a six year old be reading. (If you want literature on the issue of 'reading late' I can give you a list). I believe if you were well informed and argued your case well that you could convince the most "schooled" inspector of your convictions on these issues, plenty of people in every state of Australia have done so.

But I can hear your reply "Why should I, have to convince anyone of anything if I am looking after my children, love them and can see they are achieving? My way of explaining this is fairly simple and can be best described with a few poor analogies but here goes.

If you went into a butcher's shop and ask for chops the butcher is likely to say "Which ones lady? "Chump, grilling, cutlets, pork, shortloin etc.?" Most likely of course you have already specified "which" chops and even how much you want, 2 kilos or 20 of them.

The same happens throughout our lives. We obey road rules because it avoids head on collisions with people who might prefer to drive on the other side of the road. We generally use metric terms because a group of intelligent people decided that metric was a more convenient system to imperial. We ask for a special type of material by name or colour.

As individuals we follow rules, some of them are not so good of course, but many of them are useful, keep us safe and enable the great majority of people to live in harmony. The same happens with homeschooling, the education department regulates it, this is probably not a great rule, but it is the way it is at present. They are the biggest so they define what we shall call "the chops". They call them "efficiency" and "evidence" and "evaluation" you probably call them "being there", "listening" and "questioning" . The fact is though that if you want to talk to the rule makers you have to either make them understand your words or attempt to understand theirs and frame what you are doing in their jargon. Considering the fact that we ask our children to learn heaps of new things all the time it should not be so hard for us to learn something new for a change as well.

I know I used to be really paranoid about the words "sequential, progressive and developmental" (our departmental bugbears) - whenever I saw them in a regulation I'd be beside myself with rage arguing both about their meanings and their application to the realities of homeschooling. I realise now that the business of education is around a $30 billion a year industry in Australia and they have to have some standards for administering all that money.

They can't really decide what it is all children should know, they can't make the kids all come out knowing the same things and they can't be sure the teachers are all equivalent and teaching the same things, so they try to regulate the "ingredients" going in.

If these words/jargon frighten you I would suggest that you consult your dictionary and attempt to meet with other homeschoolers who will explain that they are just "high filutin' " names for exactly what you are doing anyway.

It doesn't require that you change what you are doing in your family, it is merely a choice, either stand firm and make them understand your way of explaining things or be more flexible and use their terms. When in France it helps to speak a little French.

I hope this helps !

Resource Information

compiled by Jo-Anne Beirne

Special Needs Homeschoolers

'Special Needs' is the name usually given to children who have severe physical and intellectual disabilities. In our community we now have a growing number of families who have taken up the challenge to homeschool their special needs children.

I would be delighted to set aside a page, or more, for whatever the parents of these children feel would be most useful. Perhaps articles sharing ideas about stimulation, learning, good books, socialisation, respite care and other activities could be a way to start. Also I would be really happy to start a list of names, addresses and phone numbers so we can set up a support network or a phone tree for the dissemination of information about resources & facilities that have been found useful. Please take the time to contribute to this idea if you would like to give or receive some support.

Rosemary Hafner has kindly supplied information about the three Education Department documents available for special needs children from the Education Department's Resource Centre at Small's Rd North Ryde. Each of these documents would be useful when assembling a program and for springboarding ideas they are

1. **Strategies for Teaching Children with Severe Intellectual and Physical Disabilities**
2. **Curriculum Statement for the Education of Students with Severe Intellectual Disabilities**
3. **Programming Communication For Students with Severe Intellectual Disabilities**

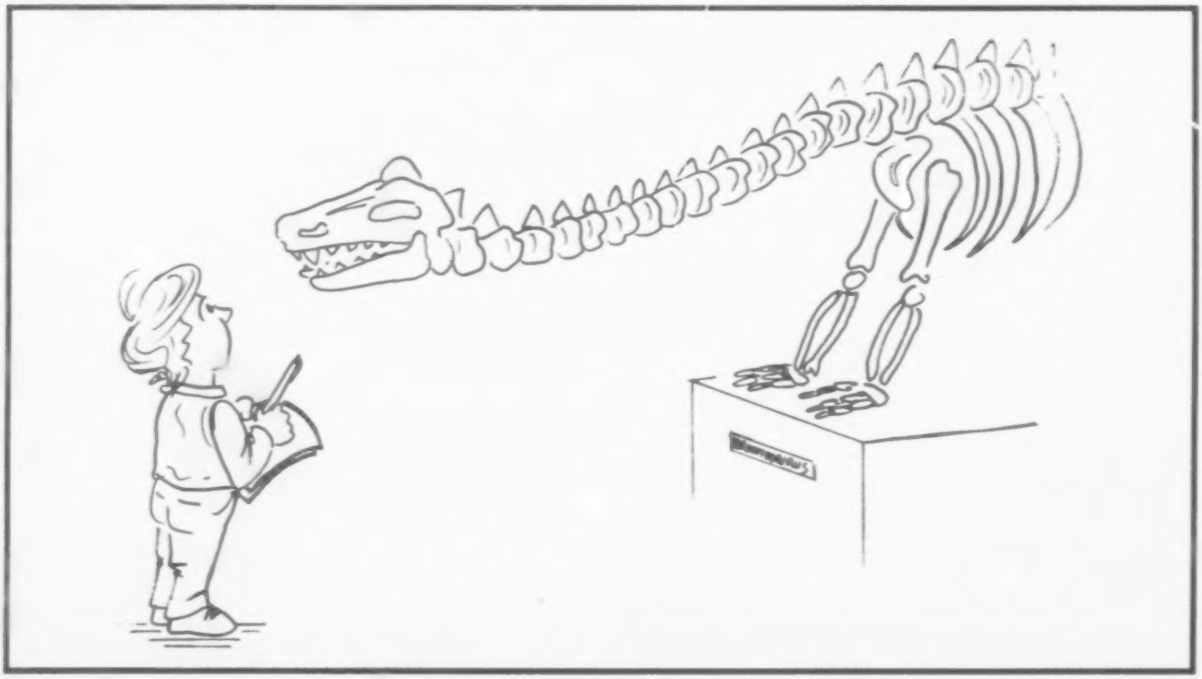
There is a Board of Studies officer that specialises in the special needs area, so that if we wished to get a coffee morning organised we could have some input from a few sources. Please send what information you have to PO Box 420 Kellyville 2153.

The NSW Genetics Education Program

The NSW Genetics Education Program produces an excellent Directory of Genetics Support Groups and Genetics Services. This 174 page directory available for $15 from PO Box 317 St Leonards 2065 lists Support groups for a large range of genetic disorders, fact sheets on each of the disorders and how to draw up a family health tree.

Testing Science

We recently were given a copy of the Australian Schools Science Competition. What an eye opener it was. No actual science knowledge is assumed only the ability to interpret and apply scientific information which is fully given in each example. My nine year old wasn't at all intimidated by it and did very well. So if you are wondering what they are up to in science in school, you can get a book copy of 'The Best of the Australian Schools Science Competition Yrs 7-10' for $15 plus $8 postage from (credit cards accepted) Phone 5643322.



Learning Disabilities

Recently I had correspondence and a huge package of well presented and researched information from the Northern Beaches Learning Difficulties Support Group. This is a very well organised group of people that have an excellent newsletter and support group meetings on the first Monday of each month at 67 Kalang Rd, Elanora Heights 2101, Phone 913 7165 . Membership is $10 per year and their opening hours are Tuesday 10-12 and Thursday 12.30-3.30. I know that many people are removing their children from school because of them being labelled ADD and LD and these people can give you reading lists and lots of support in dealing with children who may have these problems. I have enclosed one of their pamphlets with this edition of the AHJ.

The Sydney Conservatorium of Music

The Open Day of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music is on August 21st. It is always a great day with concerts from the students in singing, ensembles, soloists, jazz and orchestra.

The Hames Players

This accomplished string quartet happen also to be homeschoolers. They perform on the last Sunday afternoon of each month at the Balmain Town Hall. Playing works by -Bach, Mozart, Boccherini & Grainger. Admission $10. Concession $5. Children $2.50 Pensioners Free. Information: Phone Don Mori Ph 810-3188

Natural Life

Is a newspaper-sized publication published by Wendy Priesnitz, who has written many articles in US homeschooling magazines over the years. It is like a big version of our Australian publication Grass Roots. Address is The Alternate Press 195 Markville Rd Unionville Ontario Canada ONL3R 4V8 Subscription Rates approximately $30 US for 1 year.

ABC Education

1993 Mid year update The ABC distribute written resource materials to accompany their TV programs for example: Upper Primary - Secondary Scientific Eye is $8.95 Concepts In Mathematics: Trigonometric Functions 1 & 2, $10.75, Concepts In Science - Biology, Physics, Photosynthesis, Electrochemistry, The Mole Concept, Electricity, Electromagnetism all $10.75 each. If you are recording these shows & would like to purchase these books- ABC Educ PO Box 630, Gosford 2250. Phone 008 800 150.

Festival of Light

Caroline Fraser is co-ordinating a Christian Family Parade for the Festival of Light for Monday October 4th. If you would likemore information please ring Caroline.

Academic Remainders

Clouston & Hall are booksellers who sell remaindered items from many of the large publishing houses. Some of their books are quite cheap and their range of titles is impressive. If you would like a copy of their catalogue please ring them on 06 280 4499 or toll free 008 026 168. Their address is PO Box 457 Fyshwick 2609.

Dominie School Books and Materials Centres

These very well known school book sellers have a huge range of books and hands on materials a their shops and will, for a price usually, send you a copy of their huge catalogue which covers all subject areas. Look the local address up in your phone book but they are in NSW at Brookvale, Victoria Mt Waverley, Queensland Mt Gravatt, Sth Brisbane, Indooroopilly and Ipswich. S.A Wingfield, W.A. Osborne Park, Tasmania Launceston.

Computers

A Review of the Computer game "Civilization"

by Gregory Beirne & Toby Adams

"Civilisation" is a computer game in the tradition of "A-Train" and "Sim-City". The game starts in 4000 B.C., when you control a band of "Settlers", and your first of many goals is to find a suitable place to start your first city. Once you have founded your city(s), it becomes the producer of military units, city improvements, and wonders of the world (7 ancient, 7 medieval and 7 modern) (they, the wonders, have good effects on your civilisation), but probably most important is more settlers. Settlers carry out the following tasks: start new cities, build irrigation, forts, roads and railroads. The last can only be achieved after you (and your wise men) discover the technology advance of "Railroad".

The discovering of new technology, is carried out through the slow (time-wise), but educated, minds (if they have any!) of your "wise (they wish!) men". The attainment of certain technological advances leads on to the discovering of more sophisticated technologies. The order of technology advances is integrated in a flow chart in the back of the manual. With the technologies, you basically have to have to re-discover just about everything known to us today. Some of the technologies include: Railroad, Mathematics, Pottery, Iron Working, Bridge Building, Construction, Gunpowder, Conscription, Medicine, Combustion, Steel, Space Flight, Nuclear Fusion, Atomic Theory, Advanced Flight and Genetic Engineering. (The last one is a real doozy. The wonder of the world that can be built after the discovery of this technology is a "Cure for Cancer" wonder!).

You also have to control the financial side of your empire. You must decide whether to spend money on luxuries, which keep your citizens a little happier, to spend money to get technologies quicker, what tax levels to use to gain more money, and whether to trade with other civilizations via your trade "Caravans", which brings in plenty of money (usually). Using money you can also speed up the building of military units, city improvements, and wonders of the world.

The decision whether to make peace or war with opposing civilizations also rests with you (unless the opposing civilization makes the decision for you). If you are a Republican or Democratic government, your Senate will not allow you to go to war with another civilization unless you were already at war with the other civilization when that government came into power. Any offer of peace by another civilization will be accepted by a Democratic or Republican government's Senate.

Tips & Hints

*The discovery by your civilization of the advances of gunpowder & combustion makes your existing barracks obsolete, and they are pulled down. It is a good idea to sell your barracks just before you invent gunpowder or combustion. (Note: Having barracks in a city makes any military unit raised by that city immediately become a veteran unit (Increases attack and defence factors, which otherwise would have taken several fights.)

*Before you have any city improvements, which costs money to maintain, put your tax level down to 0%, which puts 100% of your taxes towards the discovering of new technologies.

*If you have the Russians as your neighbours, be very wary of them, and you should probably destroy them as soon as possible, as they are very untrustworthy, very militant, and will barely ever keep peace treaties. Note: their leader is Stalin. (A cheating way of saving yourself from militant civilizations is to (IBM Only) hit "ALT" R, which randomises world leaders' personalities, which is how a civilization's militancy, peacefulness or expansionistic behaviour is determined.)

*When you build Settlers in a city, that city's population level goes down by 1, so raising lots of settlers in one city can strangle its growth.

*Each "wonder of the world" requires different numbers of "recources" to be completed. "Caravan" units are very useful for helping build wonders. Just move them into a city and they will put about 50 "resources" towards building whatever wonder it is you are building in that city.

Hardware Requirements

IBM: This game is quite playable on a 286, though you need a Hard Disk or 2 High density floppies. EGA graphics are adequate but VGA are a lot better. There is sound support.

Macintosh: LC or later, colour monitor with system 6:07 or later.

Art in the homeschool

I have just returned from cleaning up a hugely messy kitchen where the children aged 3 to 13 have just been "painting". What a thrill! Don't get me wrong I do love to see the kids creating masterpieces (not so the mess), I do love colour and texture and looking at other people's paintings on art gallery walls but I'm personally about as arty as a lump of concrete.

Yes, I have read Betty Edward's Drawing on the Right Side of The Brain and I do have enough confidence to know that if I really stuck at it I could probably draw at least as well as your average person. But that is just it, I love to look and admire but I'd rather not paint or draw.

But what about the kids? Are they destined to be artistically deprived due to my obvious failings in this area? Well some would say, quite rightly, yes. Pro Hart would probably freak if his children couldn't express themselves through paint (I read once a while back that Pro Hart was homeschooled for some significant time), but what to do about it? Classes, well we have tried these with varying degrees of success and interest. Immersion, yes, we've done the art exhibition and art gallery circuit "Not another exhibition, please Mum".

I'm just not like a homeschooler I know whose lumps of wood become miraculous music stands and whose lumps of clay soon look like pots and jugs and cute little houses. I'm a slave of the books, and yes, we've been through many inspiring ones over the years about puppets, finger painting, drawing the human body, watercolours etc . I've read Making Things, Drawing with Children and Art from Many Hands and they gave us lots of ideas.

But our most recent "find" has been 'Watercolour for the Artistically Undiscovered' by Thacher Hurd and John Cassidy. We got this book at Dymocks and it was not real cheap - but contains about a term's worth of solid work (around $29.95) and lots of jumping off points to continue with after. If you have more that one child able to use it is even more economical!

In this book you paint, sketch and basically work with watercolours under the headings of

*really basic watercolour technique, *colour mixing, *using your pencil, *washes, *light and shadow (this is explained really well), *perspective, *painting a still life and *tell a story.

Anyway it has encouraged some interesting questions and some proud productions for us, maybe it will do the same for you!

Drama:
Improvisation

This excerpt from the book Making Theatre by Herbert Kohl available from The John Holt Bookstore for $28 + postage.

Improvisation

Doing theatre with children consists of more than putting on plays. The performance of a play is a particular event, a focusing of talent and energy on a moment that happens and then passes. The development of the skills and sensibility that make for good theatre also provides avenues for the development of self-confidence and sensitivity to the voices and gestures of others, and the experience of working collectively. Because teaching drama has such serious potential, I like to start with charged themes, common but difficult emotions, gestures, and moments of discovery.

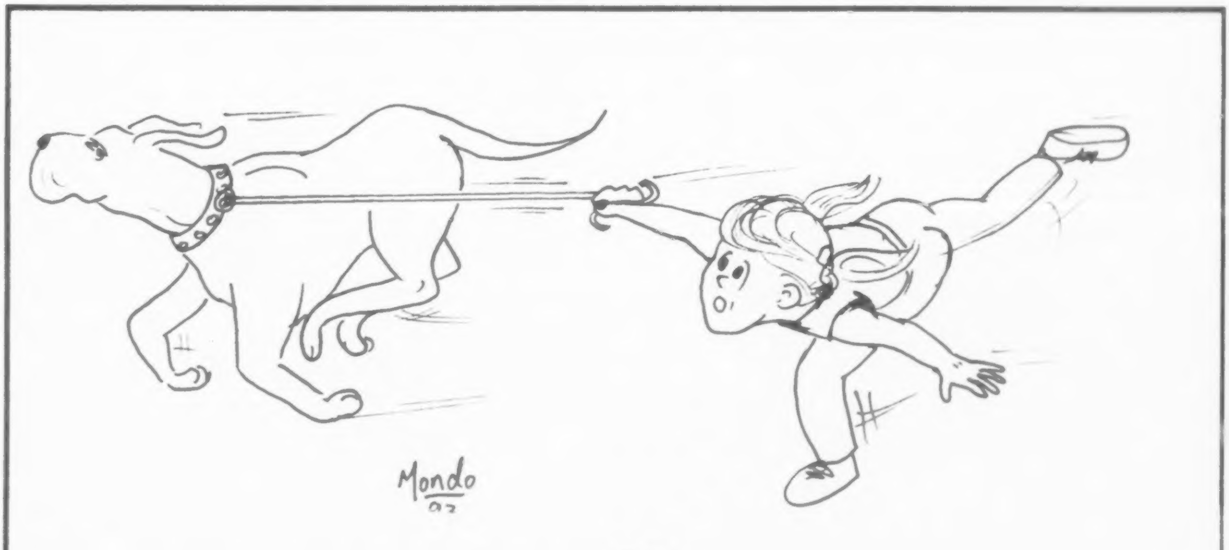
Imagine the following: You find yourself in front of a door in a stage house. You don't know how you got there, why you are there, or on what part of the planet the whole scene takes place. You are just there and have to open the door. How do you feel before touching the door knob? Express it in your face and body and then slowly reach for the knob while creating the room behind the door in your imagination. What happens?

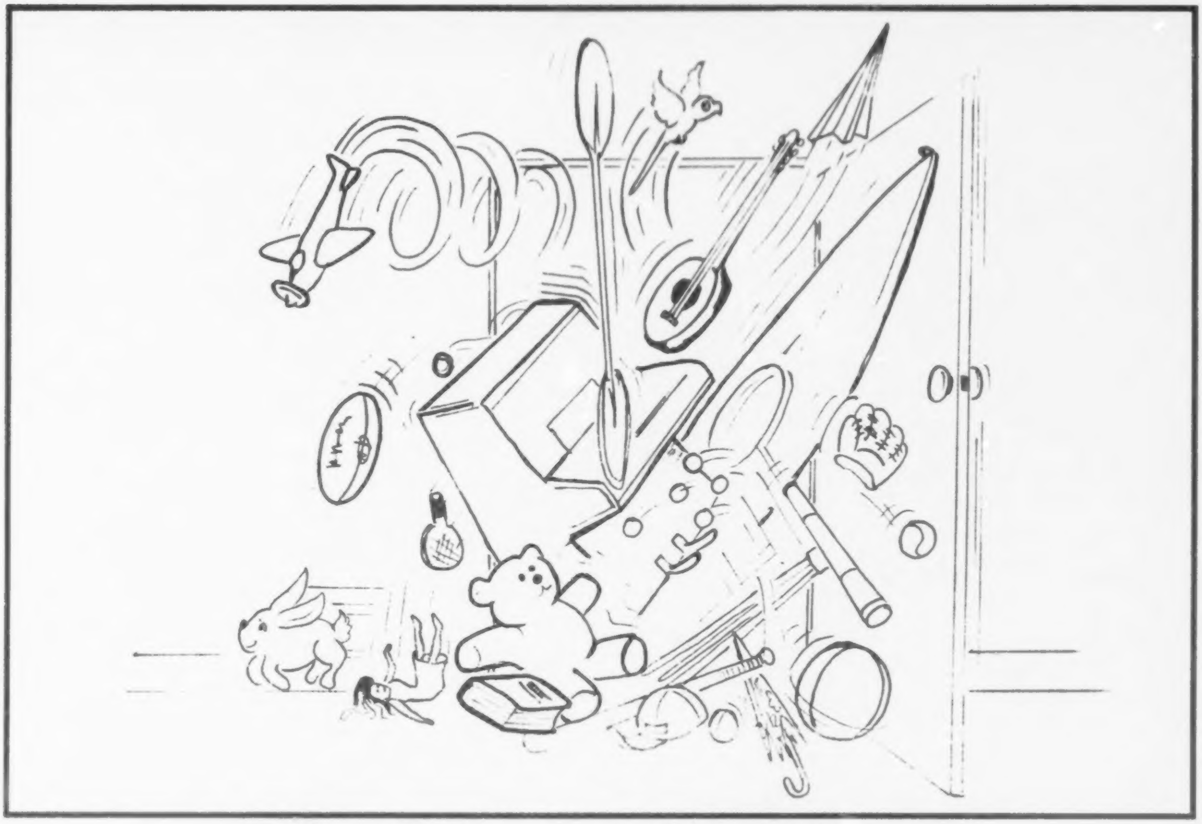
This simple exercise bears repeating. On the first try with a group of children, there is often a monster behind the door, or something equally predictable. With repetition the imagination stretches a bit: you might find a book of spells, a key, a long passage, a sad or happy person, or another door behind the door. The more people become involved, the more it challenges everyone's imagination. Ideas lead to other ideas in the noncompetitive and nongraded world of free improvisation. It's not difficult to invent situations that can lead to improvisation. Here are some to play with:

1. You fall asleep and then awake to find yourself on a strange planet. You hear footsteps approaching. What do you do?
2. There is a full moon and you are taking a walk admiring the sky when all of a sudden your skin feels funny. Little by little, hair by hair, you find yourself transformed into a werewolf. Act out the transformation. Begin by seeing the moon and feeling very small changes in your hands, face, and feet.
3. You are escaping from prison and think you are being chased. Act out getting away. (This can also be done as an improvisation of running away from home.)
4. You find yourself, like Alice, transformed first into a tiny, tiny creature and then into a giant. Act out those changes and then "explain" your changes to a friend.
5. It is a stormy night and the electricity has gone off. You hear a strange noise in your house and go to discover what it is.

What these situations have in common is an element of mystery: a transformation, a discovery, or an uncertain outcome that challenges the improviser. All of them also have no single best way of being played. Good improvisational situations evoke multiple interpretations. They can also involve more that one person. It makes sense to do individual and group improvisations, and constantly to extend the boundaries of what your students do.

One way to come up with your own list of situations is to examine classical literature (including fairy tales & myths), much of which is full of mystery, challenges, uncertainty and magic. Example, The Tempest begins with a shipwreck; Hamlet sees the ghost of his father and has to figure out whether he is dreaming or not: Little Red Riding Hood has to go through he dangerous woods; Hansel and Gretel plan to escape the witch; Orpheus has to descend into the underworld and, on returning to the land of the living, never turn to look back; Oedipus has to answer the riddle of the Sphinx. All of these themes can be transformed into improvisational situations.





Birthday Gift Ideas

Kim Preston

3-5 YEARS

pkt seeds and flower pot $5, thin circular tree-stumps $3, wood 'off-cuts' & sandpaper $ 5 **Nursery**
metal dustpan and brush $8 **Fire Place Shop**
3-ply wood squares (sand corners) $3, plank of wood (sanded) $5, trowel $5, paintbrush $4 **Hardware**
bicycle bell $4 & bicycle basket $7 **Cycle shop**
ice block makers, pkt wooden pegs & cookie-cutters around $4 **Supermarket**
small cane basket $10 **Market**
jar of pretty buttons $3, aluminium pans for sand-pit $2, carved wooden bowls $2, wooden egg-cups (tea-set) $2, cotton tablecloths, dress up shoes and hats, silk scarf, candlewick bedspreads, old pottery jugs & teapots All around $2 at an **Op Shop**
full-bodied 'dancing skirt', cover shoe-box with paper, cardboard-box car or doll's house - **Homemade**

6-8 YEARS

Torch & batteries $10, 4m rope (skipping), padlock, chain @ $4, rope pulley $5, garden rake$6, sandpaper 40c p/s **Hardware**
candle-holder, candle-snuffer $6-$8 **Giftshop**
kitchen knife $10, chopping board $8, magnifying glass $6, stapler $8, celotape dispenser $10, straw broom $10, photo album$6 , scissors $8, 3 balls wool @ $3 **Dept Store**
bucket and car sponge $8, nailfile and nail brush $6 **Supermarket**
Vase - Crystal/Pottery $5, old cake tin - sewing box $4 **Op Shop**
assorted lace and ribbon $6, pktsbeeswax or clay for modelling $3- $6 **Craft Shop**
card games e.g. Happy Families $3, pad/drawing paper $4 **Newsagent**
basket of 'similar - size' pebbles for counting etc from beach, needle - case with large needles, snakes and ladders game **Homemade**

BIG GIFTS

Fruit tree $ 25 **Nursery**
hairbrush $35 **Chemist**
Cottage spade (smaller spade)$32, hammer, nails, soft-wood$28, secateurs$18, tool box $10- $40, tape measure$20, air foot-pump $15 saw and rasp (file) $25- $30 **Hardware**

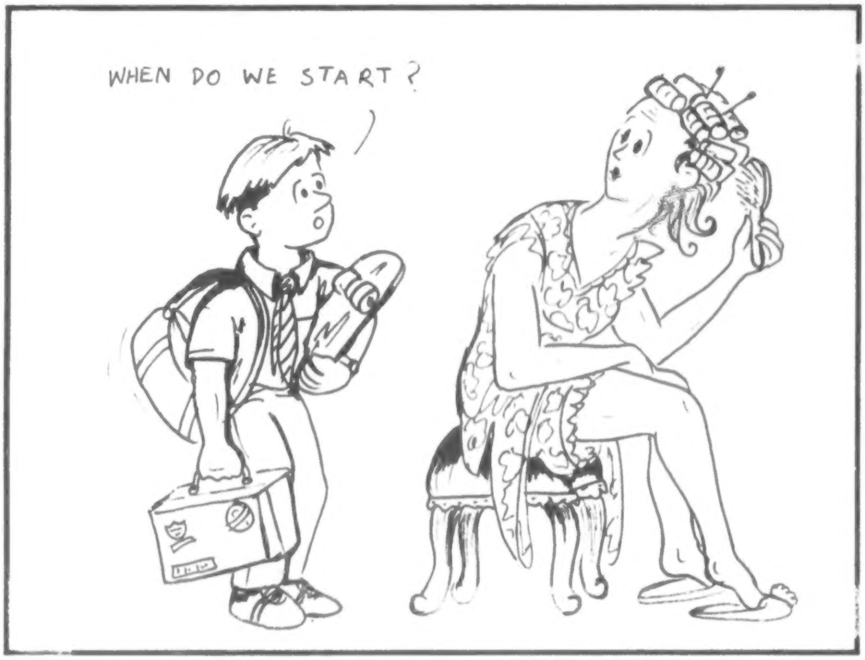
PARTY 'TAKE HOME' GIFTS

tiny soaps
candle
small magnets
hair clips
note book
scrunchie
mini paper parasol's
marbles in bag
shell
posy of flowers
crystal
balloons
cookie cutters
tiny gift-boxes
pkt seeds
ball of wool
paper aeroplane
'S' hook
pkt sparkles
chalk
cats-cradle
wool plaits
ribbons and lace

From School to Homeschooling

Daniel Bergin

Reprinted from Growing Without Schooling (G.W.S.) a superb home-schooling magazine from the U.S.


WHEN DO WE START?

If you've already been in school for a while and then you start homeschooling, at first it's pretty hard because your friends are still at school. But that gets better after a while because they can still come over after school and on Saturdays and Sundays. Also, even though my old friends are at school, I have new friends who aren't in school. I met them at our local homeschool support group gatherings, and also Mum found out about all the families homeschooling in the towns around us and got their phone numbers and called them up. Then we visited these families and I became friends with some of the kids.

Homeschooling can be kind of boring at first because you're so used to having teachers tell you what to do. But then it gets a lot better, believe me. It's like me writing this story. I'm having fun doing it. When you homeschool and you choose to do things, they can be fun.

In school it was really bad because the teachers were really mean. Since I've been out of school for almost five years now, I've forgotten about most of it except for the teachers making me put my head on the desk if I did something wrong. I remember my neck getting really sore. Also, some of the kids who go to school are really mean. I have a friend named Jared. Most of the kids think he's pretty weird, and one day he was just walking by this kid named Scott, and Scott grabbed Jared and spat in his face for no reason, and then grabbed his finger and twisted it around so he sprained it!

Another bad thing about school is homework. And then there's sports. When you play sports in the middle of such a busy schedule, they drain all of your energy. I've watched my friends who are in school varsity sports. I think sports are a trick that schools play on kids to make them get so exhausted that they can't complain, and also to give them a reason to come to school just when they start really hating school.

Homeschooling is great because you can do things that the kids in school can't. Like my brother went to Alaska for three months, and I can go to Mount Katahdin and camp there on weekdays. My learning doesn't take as much time at home, and it's more fun. Last summer I caught a lot of butterflies and then let them go, because I was really interested in butterflies then. One day we went to a museum at a college that was full of butterflies from the tropics. There were some very rare ones. Some of them were twelve inches across and seven inches long, and the colours were amazing.

I make a lot of money since I'm out of school because on weekdays I can get money snow shovelling while other kids are at school. I had another job, too, but I didn't get paid for it. It was an apprenticeship at a national fish hatchery. One day when I was 11 we were visiting the hatchery and looking around at the thousands of fish. I said I'd love to work there. My mum said she didn't know if they would let children volunteer. But we went right into the chief's office and found that they had a volunteer program already in place and had no problem with children volunteering as long as their parents signed a release form.

I volunteered there once or twice a week for about three hours. I got to feed fish and spawn huge salmon. One of my jobs was to go into a little pool where there was about twenty salmon and pick them up and put them into a net. For some reason it helped them get ready for spawning better because they flopped around more. It was so much fun trying to get them with a net. The rangers also let me hold these huge ten-pound salmon while we got the eggs out and fertilised and then sent them off to the hatchery. They liked having me there to help, because I liked doing some of the jobs that they thought were boring, like feeding the thousands of fish, and that freed them up to do other things.

Another Case for Funding

Barbara Braathen

I haven't actually worked in the NSW Education system, but by virtue of my qualifications, I understand I could be employed and be given the responsibility of 30 odd kids, with no overt supervision. I would be able to write reports like "J does not try hard enough", or "D is a daydreamer" or "P missed too much school last year due to sickness: I trust he will make up the work" etc, etc. and my opinion would be enough. The issue here is that it is the child's problem as to whether he learns anything or not.

Given that I had the responsibility of 30 odd kids, would I take it seriously? To use an extreme example: the man on trial for the murder of Ebony Simpson. Just let your imagination run for a bit: Do his old teachers consider they have failed? they would dismiss (and so would I) him as 'a bad one' or that it would be the parents problem. Now imagine that man as having been homeschooled (could it happen ?) (a) the parents would be expected to take full responsibility (b) the media would undertake an expose of homeschooling blaming it for producing 'animals', or emotionally damaged etc etc.

Yet how is it that teachers can be given responsibility with no accountability? Is it just a matter of passing the buck when something goes wrong? As there is great concern at the moment in the community about the level of violence, lack of observable standards, homeless kids etc. Perhaps we should be emphasising the idea that homeschooling parents do take responsibility and take it seriously and are prepared to be accountable.

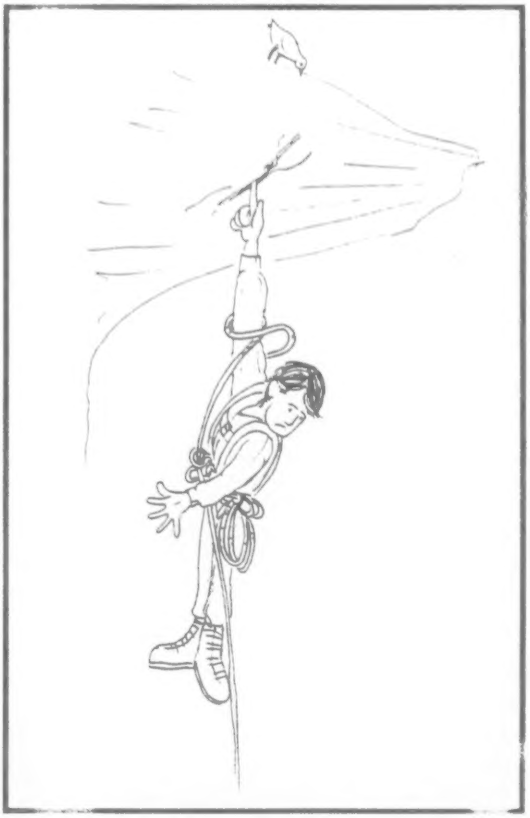
When I was growing up, it was quite clear that the parents had pastoral care, the day schools academic care, while the boarding school would make full allowance for academic and pastoral care. In our community today the division of responsibility between family and school is less obvious and it could be argued that this is a good thing. If one party isn't doing a good job then maybe the other will. It is unfortunate however that when you divide the responsibility, without a clear definition of the duties of each, the result is often an abrogation of that responsibility by either side. I have often stood in a staffroom to hear such things as "Joe is being very disruptive and his work is very poor"...."Oh didn't you know .... his father's run off with ....", and I've lost count of the parents who say "Wendy's teacher doesn't understand her, what can we do?"

The Economic Advisory Council to the Federal Government have put forward a proposal to fine parents by withholding their family allowance if their child is not performing at school. It was further proposed that teachers could visit homes to assess whether the parents were doing the right thing....the teachers were presumed to have the expertise.... While I have no doubt the proposal will be buried where it justly deserves to be, it does reflect some genuine concern over the problems that are currently facing our schools. It is just such concerns that have led many of us to take the option of homeschooling. I personally would like it to be more widely understood that as homeschoolers we do take responsibility, and take it seriously, and are prepared to be accountable.

Unfortunately my perception is that we are treated as somehow less than a teacher in a school, not quite trusted in some way. Is this because we are not part of a system, unpaid, or have no trade Union? Or is it that we are not a full member of society in the same way 'women at home' have been painted?

I would like to be considered a professional at least on a par with teachers, not for myself but for my children and their future careers. How could this be achieved? Perhaps it would be advantageous to us if there were more rigorous conditions placed on gaining a homeschool registration. The obvious problem with this is that the simplest way is the 'Bureaucratic measure', ie 'attendance' or 'time spent' type of records, and any teacher will tell you mere attendance at school activities does not imply any learning has taken place.

Perhaps funding can help here. Thanks to the Carrick Review Committee and the subsequent change in the N.S.W. law we can now be considered on a par with a registered school. This has been an important step, but I would also like the recognition, acceptance or professional standing that other private schools currently have in our community. Would not some level of Government funding gain us such recognition?



Reading - A Homeschool Survey

compiled by Jo-Anne Beirne

Jo-Anne's Note:
It occurred to me, while looking over my children's reading recently, that homeschooled children probably do a great deal more reading than your average child, basically because of the time they have available. So, I devised a simple survey to guage just what homeschoolers read and sent it out to a few people. Thanks to all those who participated. I think the results give us all some books we may like to pursue in the future. Interestingly enough a fortnight or so after the surveys were returned to me reading became a topic of discussion with the Pamela Protheroe books and interview. I thought publishing her ideas and Anna Adams reply to those ideas, might give us all something to think about.

Family: Shellard
Children: John 8 yr & David 6 years
Children's Interests are: Battles, Electronics and Engineering
Books they have read: Narnia series by C. S. Lewis, Biggles, Around the World in 80 Days
Books I have read to them: Enid Blyton Famous Five, Wind in the Willows, Little Pilgrims Progress, Cocky's Circle Books
Must find some: Interesting geographics books.

Family: Boxx
Student: Isaac 16 years
Student's Interests are: Space, Science, Fantasy, Fiction (S&S)
Books I have read: Mars - Ben Bova, Contact - Carl Sagan, Domes of Fire - David Eddings, Eleniwn triology - David Eddings, Above Top Secret - Timothy Good, Light Years - Gary Kinder, Space Demons - Gillian Rubinstien
Books I would like to read: Red Mars, Blue Mars, Green Mars, The Shining Ones - David Eddings, Galaxy Arena - Gillian Rubinstien
I would like more books about: New technology, Space exploration (fact), Time travel theory.

Family: Boxx
Children's ages: 9, 8, 6, 5, 4, 2, and1
Books I have read to them - Age read to is under 10, The Wizard Of Oz, Alice In Wonderland, Babar series, Laura Ingle Wilder series, The Eleventh Hour, The Sign Of The Seahorse, The Fantastic Mr Fox, (and others by Roald Dahl) The Pink Panther Stories, Robin Hood, King Arthur And The Knights Of The Round Table, Children's Bible Stories, Dot And The Kangaroo, The Billabong series, Famous Five series
Would like more books about: The lives of children in past times. Also the world and universe - on a children's level. **Comments** - Our 15 month old likes the "touch and feel" books

Family: Manuel
Children: Aged 2 and 4 years
Books I have read to them: Tucking Mummy In, Any of the Golden Books, A Possum In The House, Books that can be sung - 12 Days of Christmas -(a huge favourite)
Would like more books about: Gentleness, respect, consideration and relationships for the children to begin learning from. Books on personality traits and sharing love - with a moral to the story. Thinking books where the children have to find a hidden creature or object, puzzle books

Family: McAulay
Children: Duncan 14, Caroline 10, Katherine 6 and Hugh 4 years
Children's Interests are: Reading, soccer, tennis, drawing and music.
Books they have read: **Duncan:** Goodnight Mr Tom - M. Magorian, I Am David - A. Halm, The Cay - T. Taylor, The Hobbit - J. R. R. Tolkien, The Shield Ring - R. Sutcliff, Boy and Going Solo - R. Dahl, **Caroline:** The Hardy Boys - Franklin Dixon Patricia St John books, Usborne books, In Grandma's Attic - Arleta Richardson,

The Railway Children - E Nesbitt, Enid Blyton books, The Silver Brumby - Elyne Mitchell, Tom Sawyer - Mark Twain, The Boxcar Children - Gertrude Warner, Judith Beresford books.
Would like more books on: sport, art, science, model aircraft's
Books I have read to them: We of the Never Never, John Milton - Hobbs, The Children Of The New Forest - Marryat, Robert Schumann - Wheeler, Usbourne books, Tales From Shakespeare - Lamb, Florence Nightingale, The Incredible Journey - Burnford, In Grandma's Attic - Richardson, Blinky Bill, Snugglepot And Cuddlepie, Dot And The Kangaroo - Pedley, The Railway Children - Nesbitt, Arabian Nights, The Siren Wailed - Streatfield, Sugar Creek Gang Series, The Radium Woman - Doorly
Comments: -Fortunately we all love reading and being read to - just making time is the issue !!

Family: Stevenson
Children: Philip 7 & Connie 5 years
Children's Interests are: Motorbikes, drawing, chooks and pigeons.
Books they have read: The Three Bears, The Enormous Turnip, The Pied Piper, Bears In The Night, Little Red Riding Hood
Would like more books on: Wildlife, (bush and undersea), specific machinery such as Harley Davidsons, books on motorbikes.
Books I have read to them: All Things Wise & Wonderful - James Herriot, Wind In The Willows - Kenneth Graham, The Adventures Of Ginger Meggs - James Kemsley, The Owl Who Was Afraid Of The Dark - Jill Tomlinson, Charlie And The Chocolate Factory - Roald Dahl, The Complete Adventures Of Blinky Bill - Dorothy Hall, Snugglepot And Cuddlepie - May Gibbs, Winnie The Pooh Series - A. A. Milne, My Book Of Bible Stories - Watchtower Society, The Man Who Planted Trees - Jean Giorno, Burke And Wills - Roland Harvey, The Land Of Mad - R. L. Stevenson, Bedtime Rhymes - Ladybird, poems from This Land-Flynn & Green, & Bush Ballads of Australia - Currawong Press, excerpts of kids choices from Australia's Dangerous Creatures - Readers Digest.

Family: Cartwright
Children: Ashton 10 & Chris 9 years.
Books they have read: Roald Dahl books, Follow My Leader - James B. Garfield, T. A. C. K - Miller and Robinson, Hitchhikers Guide To The Galaxy - Douglas Addams, Chocky - John Wyndam, Cowboy Books - Lewis Liamour, Enders Game - Orson Scott Card, S F Wizard Stories - Ursula K. le Guin
Books I have read to them: The Hobbit, Lord Of The Rings etc - Tolkein, The Secret Garden - Frances H. Burnett, Winnie The Pooh, House At Pooh Corner - Milne, Charlottes Web

Family: Keen
Children: Toby 12, Zoe 10 & Josie 8
Children's Interests are: Reading, sewing, writing letters, riding bikes, lego & knitting
Books they have read: Zoe: Lotta Leaves Home, The Mischievous Martins, Pudding And Pie, A Clock Called Kate, Tales Of A Little Grey Rabbit, The Adventures Of Odd And Elsewhere, The Butcher, The Beagle And The Dog Catcher, A House In A Town, **Josie:** The Cat In The Hat, Ernest And Celestine, Tales Of Amanda Pig, Little Brown Mouse, Frosty The Snow Man, The Mouse With The Too-Long Tail
Books I have read to them: The Bible, The Wizard Of Oz, The Little House Books, The Muddle-Headed Wombat, The Borrowers Series, The Spirit Flyer series, Seven Little Australians, For Me, Me, Me, Possum Magic, Peter Pan, Winnie The Pooh, 101 Great Australians, Mulga Bills Bicycle, Frank Peretti Books - The Door In The Dragon's Throat,The Narnia Books, A Collection Of Austrailian Bush Verse
Would like more books about: Children in other countries, home-schooled children & Australian history in story form for children

Family: Arthur
Children: Landon 9 , Regan 6 & Bree 2
Books I have read to them: The Secret Garden, William And Air Raid Precautions - Richard Crompton, Heidi - Johanna Spyri, Charlie And The Chocolate Factory - Roald Dahl, Little House On The Prairie, Narnia series, Georges Marvellous Medicine - Roald Dahl, Robin Hood, The Adventures Of Black Beauty
Comment: I haven't found it a problem to find books on anything.

Don't stop reading to your children when they can read themselves

"My child can read so why should I bother ?" Reading as a family is an interesting pastime. It also enables you to extend your children's knowledge base into areas they may not normally think to choose for themselves. When they were little you often read books to them they did not understand fully, the same can happen as they are older. By making the effort to read to your older children you may be broadening their educational horizons.

Books that parents can and should read to their teenage children would be the classics including Shakespeare, Dickens, Homer, Plutarch, Socrates, poetry by Wordsworth, Keats, scientific and environmental articles from Australian Geographic, National Geographic, Scientific American, Nature, physics, chemistry, astronomy, geology and political history books that really need to be discussed and referenced.

Family: Mulders
Student: Natali 13 years
Student's Interests are: horses and horse riding
Books Natalie has read: Little Women, Anne Of Green Gables series - I. M. Montgomery, The Heavenly Horse From The Outermost West & Piper At The Dates Of Dawn - Mary Stanton, Tales From Shakespeare - Charles and Mary Lamb, Mysteries From Forgotten Worlds - Berlitz

Family: Warner
Children: Crystal 8 , Adrian 6 years (also 3 and 1 year olds)
Children's Interests are: forever changing
Books I have read to them: Bible Story Picture Book, Little House On The Prairie, Heidi, Pigs And Honey, Swallows and Amazons, Young Scientist and the Childcraft series, Machinery Books
Would like more books about: Well behaved boys! Biographies written for children about children which will teach good character traits.
Comments: The boys love books about machinery, what it is for, how it works etc - eg. Snoopy's Question book about machines/things that go. Adrian(6) has been through Ancient History, Creation Government, fishing, wild animals, monsters, all the young scientist books, he is fascinated by Aborigines, The Chinese, any animals, farming, climate, volcanoes etc. (loves documentaries on T.V.). He can't read yet, but has memorised "Pigs and Honey" which has a lot of words. He hates "readers". Crystal (8) went from seasons and nature, to cute girl stories, to fashion, to horses, to endangered animals, to horses, to farms, to other cultures, especially European.

Family: Hammond
Student: Althea 13 years
Children's Interests are: Dance, music, computers, history, science fiction & poetry
Books Althea has read: Alanna series - Tamora Pierce, Citizen Of The Galaxy - Robert Heinlein, Restoree - Anne McCaffery, On Fortunes Wheel - Cynthia Voight, The Zero Stone - Andre Norton
Would like more books about: like the Alanna books, and more like Citizen Of The Galaxy and Restoree. These books were written well and I throughly enjoyed them.
Books I have read to Althea & Jordan (10): All books by Robert Newton Peck, Shel Silverstein Poetry Collections,The What-a-Mess series - Frank Muir
Would like more books on: Children with really good characterisation, also more books like Tin Tins and Asterisk - the comic book format that all kids love, but literate good vocab and stories with fewer stereotypes.

Family: Armanious
Children: Elizabeth 13 years and Luke 12 years
Children's Interests are: Reading, art, computers, cycling and lego
Books they have read: Elizabeth: Lord Of The Rings, Cuperpunk, Klontarf - Colin Thiele,Witch Week - Dianne Jones. **Luke:** The Biggles series, The Red King
Books I have read to them: Kapatoo, Tomb Travellers - Roy Pond

Family: Paine
Children: April 12 years, a 10 year old and a 6 year old.
Children's Interests are: Everyday life and a bit out of the ordinary
Books they have read: Space Demons and Skymaze - Gillian Rubinstein, Scatterlings - Isobel Carmody, Books by Paul Jennings, Robin Klein, Judy Blume, Enid Blyton, Roald Dahl and Dick King-Smith
Books I have read to them: Graeme Base Books - Eleventh Hour and Animalia,The Never Ending Story, Robin Hood, Where The Forest Meets The Sea - Jamie Baker, Little Critter books - Mercer Meyer, The Rupert series, The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles, Round The Twist etc - Paul Jennings, Jan Pierkowski books, Janet and Alan Alberg books
Would like more books on: stories that relate to real life - fictional stories with photographic illustrations - illustrations are very important for interest in younger children. **Bev Paine: A comment on types of books available for boys age 8 - 12** who are not proficient readers, or who are beginner readers. There doesn't seem to be a lot written for this age/interest group, in the cheap, paperback range. (This is understandable as most boys this age can read) However, I first came across

How do I find out about new books for my children?

1. Your library - I read recently that 67% of all Australians regularly use a library.

2. The NSW Education Department's School Magazines have been really useful in encouraging our children to explore new authors and playwrights because they print extracts and samples and some lovely poetry.

3. Read Jim Trelease's guide called "The Read Aloud Handbook".

4. Read "Books Children Love" by Elizabeth Wilson.

The K.O.A.L.A. awards

With the K.O.A.L.A. awards (Kids' Own Australian Literature Awards), children are given a list of books to read and evaluate through the library. This often encourages them to read books that they may not otherwise read. Check with your librarian for more information.

this problem when my children were at school! My son has always valued illustrated books and the lack of illustrated novels for kids has restricted his interest in books (which isn't great anyway.) P.S. The best read book in this house is the 50c lego catalogue!!

Family: Westenberg
Children: Luke 13, Greg 10 & Nick 9
Children's Interests are: Luke war games &history, Nicholas - WWI & crafts, Gregory history and sport.
Books they have read: Biggles series, Martians and Venus series - Edgar Rice Burroughs, Little House Books - Laura Ingalls Wilder, Narnia series, A Wrinkle In Time and others - Madeleine L'Engle , Tin Tin Series - Herge, James Herriott Books, Betsy Byars series, Roald Dahl, Rosemary Sutcliff, Willard Price adventure books, Enid Blyton books, The Phantom Tollbooth , Legions Of The Eagle, Pollyanna, Heidi, Black Beauty, Little Pilgrims Progress, What Katy Did Next, Asterix books, Childcraft books, Huckleburry Finn, Leon Garfield's Shakespeare Stories, Mr Midshipman Hornblower, Ruth Chew, Looks Like The Magic Coin, Arthur Ransome's Swallows And Amazons, Treasure Island, The Three Musketeers, The Prince And The Pauper, Worry Warts And Misery Guts AND LOTS MORE !!!
I wish there were more books around about: Biggles, The Famous Five, Peter Pan books, books like Narnia, Cowboys and Indians

Family: Westenberg
Children: As above + Toddler (2yrs) ,
Books I have read to them: Grampa's Horses, A Fly Went By, Mike's Birthday Bulldozer, Bible Stories, Little House On The Prairie, King Arthurs' Tales, Tin Tin Books, Alexander And The Terribly, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day, Alexander Who Used To Be Rich Last Sunday - Judith Viorst, Carry On Mr Bowditch, From The Mixed Up Files Of Mrs Basil, Frankweiler, The Family Book Of Mary Claire, The Phantom Tollbooth and C.S. Lewis books, Narnia books, and The Hobbit.
Would like more books about: Family life and children in early Australia, as well as books involving large families.
Leonie's comment: Everyone (Mum and Dad included) has loved the "picture" books Alexander and The Terribly, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day And Alexander Who Used To Be Rich Last Sunday (Judith Viorst). We quote parts! I read aloud constantly: My husband is the "storyteller" and often "tells" his favourite books. eg. Books by Edgar Rice Burroughs

Family: Bartley
Student: Kristopher 8 years
Kris's Interests are: Pottery, cars, books and excursions
Books Kris has read: George's Marvellous Medicine - Roald Dahl, Spaghetti Tangle - Alexander McCall Smith, Charlottes Web - E. B. White, The Perils Of Pirate School - Young Puffin, Bible Stories, Charlie And The Chocolate Factory - Roald Dahl, The BFG - Roald Dahl, The Great Glass Elevator - Roald Dahl, Anything by Mem Fox
Would like more books about: I like the Young Puffin types of books, but Roald Dahl is my favourite author, because his books are so funny.
Comments: We have read the above books on Kris's list together, we also enjoy Mem Fox books and find that Kris now knows where to find the books he likes in the libruary.

Family: Sedgman
Student: Emily 13 years
Student's Interests are: Basketball, reading.
Books they have read: Massflower - Brian Jacques, (and the rest of the series), Gerald Panel Books

Family: Dowey
Child: Robert 10 years
Robert's Interests are: Phonecard collecting, anything in the bush, archery, playing with the dog - Josh.
Books he has read: Any Paul Jennings books, Any Roald Dahl books, Ninja Turtle Stories, Pick Your Own Adventure Books, There's A Wolf In My Pudding, The Blossom Stories, Birthday Burglar, Are You There God? Its Me Margaret, Frosset's Revenge
Would like more books with: More pictures and easy to read text such as Collins Eye Witness Guides, easy to read fiction with plenty of pictures.

Family: Lazar
Students Elizabeth 11, Peter 8 years
Children's Interests are: Acting, vet science, dancing and swimming
Books they have read: Elizabeth: Little House on the Prairie books , Anne Of Green Gables, Great Expectations, Midnight In The Dolls House, Milly Molly Mandy
Books I have read to them: Huckleberry Finn, Danny The Champion Of The World - Roald Dahl, Alice In Wonderland, The Water Babies, Dangerous Journey, Amelia Jane And Friends - Enid Blyton, Ramona Quimby, The Magic Pudding, Seven Little Australians
Would like more books: that had suitable topics for boys with a sense of realistic adventure - Huckleberry Finn type books.
Comments: Time has been too short this year. For a number of books I borrowed the 'read aloud' cassettes and we all listen while I iron or drive.

Family: Glen
Children: 3, 7 and 8 years
Books they have read and enjoyed: Heidi Series, Little House In The Big Woods, Blinky Bill, Little House On The Prairie, Willow Farm Books - Enid Blyton, Uncle Arthur Stories, Alison Wittley's Stories About Animals, Noddy Stories
Would like more books about: Australian colonial families' lives - like the Laura Ingles - Wilder type from USA.

Family: Pinazza
Children: Tobi 10, Eliot 7 & Jesse 4
Children's Interests are: Music, ballet, history, literature, ancient history
Books they have read: TOBI: The Hobbit, Lord Of The Rings and Silmarillion- Tolkien ,The Narnia Series - C. S. Lewis, Robin Hood - H. Pyle, Wind In The Willows - Kenneth Grahame, Bilbo's Last Song - Tolkien, Muddle-Headed Wombat - Ruth Park, Blinky Bill - Dorothey Wall, The Magic Pudding - Norman Lindsay, Mr Shy's Shoes - J. Walsh, Beethoven - P. Autezier, The Man Who Planted Trees - V. Giorno, Alice In Wonderland Books - Lewis Caroll, Famous Five and Secret Seven - Enid Blyton
Would like more books about: Tolkiens creatures - Hobbits, medieval times, history and ballet

Books I have read to them: Sign Of The Seahorse - Graeme Base, The Hobbit - Tolkein, Dinotopia - James Curney, Narnia series - C. S. Lewis, Australian Geographic Articles, Poetry books eg. The Fireside Book - David Hope, The Magic School Bus series, Magic Pudding - Norman Lindsay
Would like more books about: The values of good vs evil, but in a magical, fanciful and literacy genre, also biographies that are readable and interesting to serve as worthy models for our children.

Family: Ripolles
Children: Yvette 8, Eryn 5, Kaitlyn 3
Children's Interests are: Cooking, reading, drawing and playing
Books they have read together: The Greatest Man Who Ever Lived, Bambi, Bible Stories , The Great Australian Pumpkin, Questions Young People Ask, Answers that Work, The Rescuers, Microwave Cooking For Kids, The Gull That Lost The Sea, Shy The Platypus, Winnie The Pooh, Owl And The Pussycat, Harry The Hairy-nosed Wombat, Rufus The Red Kangaroo, Rhinoceros Success, Old Man Fire
I would like more books about: Australian Animals
Comments: My girls enjoy nearly every book that they can get their hands on!

Family: Nesbitt-Hawes
Children: Tim 9 & Laura 6 years
Children's Interests are: music, singing, play-making, puppetry, story-writing, reading drawing, making things
Books they have read: Enid Blyton books, Clifford The Big Red Dog series, James Herriot series, Ralph the Mouse stories, Meg And Mog series, Frog And Toad series, Mrs Gaddy series, Michael Salmon's books, Geoffrey Bakers' Maurice Mini Minor's Adventures, Paddington Bear's Stories, Katie Morag Stories - Mauri Hedderwick, Snugglepot And Cuddlepie Stories, Alice In Wonderland Stories, The Water Babies, The Wind In The Willows, Black Beauty, Mother Goose Treasury, Poetry Books eg. Someone Is Flying Balloons, Rattling In The Wind, Dr Seuss, Yertle Turtle, Anne of Green Gables, Some Walt Disney Stories
Comments: We borrow and buy books regularly. Our children have a great library and a great love of books. Tim reads picture books when Laura requests it and Laura spends lots of time looking through her hundreds of picture books, and can sit through hours listening to a long story until you drop from exhaustion. We read very widely and spend a lot of time reading, so it's hard to pinpoint favorites!!

Family: Macready
Children: Timothy 11 years and Alison 8 years
Children's Interests are: Stamp collecting, playing games, chess, soccer, reading puzzle books and rock collecting
Books they have read: Chronicle Of The World, Chonicle Of The Twentieth Century, Chronicle Of The Second World War, Books by Betsy Byars, especially the Cybil War and the Eighteenth Emergency, Enid Blyton's Boarding School Stories, Paul Jennings books, Roald Dahl books, Astrid Lindgren especially Emil and Karlson, Elmer Runs Wild - Patrick Cook, The Sheep-Pig - Dick King-Smith, Billy Bunter - Frank Richardson, Hating Alison Ashley - Robin Klein, The Amazing Book Of Firsts series, Krypto Books - Tim Healey, Selby's Secret series - Duncan Ball, Pinquo - Colin Thiele, Spirit Flyer series - John Bibee, Katie's Adventure series - Karen Mezek, Trixie Belden Mysteries, Computer Nut and The Blossoms - Betsy Byars, Asterix books - Uderzo
Books I have read to them: Narnia Stories, Blinky Bill, Midnite, Screwtape Letters, The Secret Garden, The Wolves Of Willoughby Chase, The Phantom Tollbooth, The Borrowers stories, Noel Streatfield's books, Skymaze, Space Demons, The Demon Headmaster, George MacDonald's Children's Stories, The Ordinary Princess, Spindles stories, Selected sections from My Family And Other Animals.
Lesley's Comment Dear Jo-Anne, I'm afraid Timothy and Alison got rather carried away with their lists of books. They have just included their favourites, which basically means books they like to re-read, although there are others they have enjoyed reading once but probably won't read again. (We had to draw the line somewhere!) As you will notice, there is quite a wide range, and the books they enjoy are not necessarily great literature.

On my survey form, I have firstly given a few books which they have both enjoyed, followed by a list of those Timothy has enjoyed, and then Alison's favourites. It has been interesting for me to find that Timothy doesn't really remember some of the books which we have read as a family such as The Hobbit and the Spindles books, but Alison wanted these put on the list. I'm not sure just what this indicates, but it is interesting! Because they got so carried away with their lists, I have put on the survey form those books which they had in common, and have taken the liberty of including a separate list for each of them, since their tastes are rather different and, even where they like the same author, they often like different books. I hope all this doesn't make it too difficult for you to draw conclusions for your article.

We picked up information about K.O.A.L.A. awards (Kids' Own Australian Literature Awards) a couple of years ago from Blacktown Library, and Timothy and Alison read a lot of books which they probably wouldn't have read otherwise because they were on the list to be read and evaluated. They enjoyed being involved, and it was a good opportunity for us to discuss why certain books did or did not appeal to us. The evaluation form was easy to fill in, and we got through an incredible number of books in a relatively short space of time. I think it was well worthwhile.

At times I have wondered whether Timothy in particular will soon reach the stage where he no longer wants me to read to him. But it doesn't look likely at the moment. He has a pile of books which he wants me to read to him, and I am happy to do it for as long as he wants. I suspect my children will be ready to stop before I am. I have visions of sitting in bed reading Anne of Green Gables or something with Alison the night before she gets married! Even with those books which they read themselves, they often like me to read them too, and it's great to be able to share reading experiences. Many of our family jokes and sayings have come from characters in books.With parents like Timothy and Alison have, I really shouldn't be surprised that they love books as much as they do. They are aware that they will have to leave a lot of things behind when we go overseas, and are willing to go without quite a few toys, but there are so many books which they don't want to part with that we will have some difficult decisions to make in the near future.

The Edited Macready List: Paul Adshead: Puzzle Island, Duncan Ball: Selby's Secret, Selby Speaks, Selby Screams, John Bibee: The Spirit Flyer series (7 Christian books published in the 1990's by Inter Varsity Press; available from Koorong Books), Betsy Byars: The Eighteenth Emergency etc. Barry Chant: a series of Christian books set in the Australian outback, Patrick Cook: Elmer Runs Wild, Tim Healey: Mr Enigma's Code Mysteries, Krypto Strikes Back, Rolf Heimann: Amazing Mazes, For Eagle Eyes Only, More For Eagle Eyes, Preposterous Puzzles, Paul Jennings: Quirky Tales, Unbelievable, Uncanny, Astrid Lindgren: Pippi Longstocking etc.Karen Mezek: (6 Christian books published by Harvest House Publishers in the 1990's and available from Koorong Books)Penguin Books: Chronicle Of The Twentieth Century, Chronicle Of The Second World War, Chronicle Of The World, Frank Richardson: Billy Bunters Double etc. David Smith and Sue Cassin: The Amazing Book Of Firsts series (4 books published by Happy Time Books), Catherine Storr: Clever Polly And The Stupid Wolf, Polly And The Wolf Again, More Tales Of Polly And The Wolf, Colin Thiele's books, Various authors: Trixie Belden Mysteries, M. M. Kaye:The Ordinary Princess George MacDonald: A 19th century author suitable for reading to children (sometimes explanation is needed), The Golden Key & Other Stories, etc.

Family: Stone

Children: Annie 11, boys 9, 7& 4

Children's Interests are: Reading, flute, pottery, weaving, environmental studies.

Books they have read: The Load Of Unicorn and The Woolpack - Cynthia Harnett, Billabong series - Mary Grant Bruce, Boy, Going Solo and Matilday - Roald Dahl, The Hardy Boys series - Frank W Dixon, James Herriot Vet Series, Growing Up In Phillips Sydney - (History Books), Secret Seven series - Enid Blyton, Childcraft set, Silver Brumby series - Elyne Mitchell, Narnia series - C S Lewis, Winding Valley Farm series - Betsy

Books I have read to the younger children: The Wheel On The School - Meindart De Jong, Little House series - Laura Ingalls Wilder, The Little White Horse - Elizabeth Goudge, Tim And Ginger stories - Edward Ardizone, Children On The Oregon Trail, James Herriot Vet Stories, Pilgrims Progress - John Bunyan, The Secret Garden - Francis Hodgson Burnett, Asterix - Tin Tin, Robin Hood - John Finemore, Narnia series - C. S. Lewis, Brambly Hedge series, In Grandma's Attic, Swallows And Amazons series - Arthur Ransome

Would like more books about: History - like the Cynthia Hartnett books.

Family: Calistro

Children: Yvette 14 and Mark 8 years

Childrens interest: Horse riding, reading, looking after children

Books they have read: Grand-ma's Attic series - A Richardson, Any Enid Blyton books, the Chalet School series - E M Brent-Dyer, Nancy Drew books - C Keen, Sweet Valley High - Francine Pacal's, Any Ivan Southall books, The China - Allan Baillie, My Place - Sally Morgan, The Children who lived In Barn Royer Falla - Susan Terrie, Student Nurse - HD Boyiston.

Books I have read to Mark: Roald Dahl books, Laura Ingalls books, Narina books, Robinson Cruso, Little Women, Happy Prince - Oscar Wilde, Rudyard Kipling books, Peter Pan, Enid Blyton books, Robin Hood

I would like more books about: Homeschoolers in Australia - like the Americans have.

Comments: Mark doesn't as yet read, so he has all his books read aloud. Yvette has a list for you as she reads on her own. Books we like to read aloud need to flow. Some books, while they are lovely stories, just do not lend to being read aloud. I found "Books Children Love" by Elizabeth Wilson to be excellent for books and ideas.

Family: Beirne

Children's Interests : **Gregory** 13 yrs reading especially about WWII, heroes, all modern history, all sorts of sport, computers, aeroplanes, maths. **Rebecca** age 11, foreign languages, history, drumming, computers, reading, science, porcelain doll making. **Stephen** age 9 interests are music, German, computer, maths, architecture, interior designing.

Books I have enjoyed by Rebecca: The Little House on the Prairie Books, Ballet Shoes, The Gemma Books and others by Noel Streatfield, The Mallory Towers &St Clare's series, The Circus Days series, The Famous Five series, The Secret Seven series by Enid Blyton, The Longtime Series and others by Hester Brinsmead (Aust), Little Women and others by Louisa May Alcott, The Rocks of Honey, I Own the Racecourse, The Ice is Coming series by Patricia Wrightson (Aust), Usborne books on lots of things, History Begins and Threads of Time by Sheena Coupe & Barbara Scanlan, The Narnia Books by C.S. Lewis, The Anne of Green Gables Books by L.M. Montgomery, The Five Children and It series and others by E. Nesbitt, The Pollyanna Books by Eleanor H. Porter, The Heidi series by Joanna Spyri and Charles Tritten, The Green Knowe series by Lucy Boston, The Borrowers series and Bedknobs and Broomsticks by Mary Norton, Doctor Dolittle series by Hugh Lofting, Chalottle's Web and other books by E.B. White, The Billabong series by Mary Grant Bruce (Aust), Mary Poppins series by P.L. Travers, Seven Little Australians and the Family at Misrule by Ethel Turner (Aus) , My Sister Sif by Ruth Park (NZ), All Creatures Great and Small and others by James Herriott, What Katy Did and others by Susan Coolidge, Snow Treasure by Marie McSwigan, Distinguished American Women,The Five Little Pepper series Margaret Sidney, My Friend Flicka and others by Mary O'Hara, Born Free and Living Free by Joy Adamson, Kids for Sail by S&P Bendell, Hard Times in Paradise- M & D Colfax, The Battle of the Galah Trees by Christobel Mattingley, The Secret Garden by Frances Hodgson Burnett, The Ramona Series by Beverley Cleary, The Kon-Tiki expedition by Thor

Heyerdahl, lots of biographies from the library especially about the women's suffrage movement at the moment I am reading about Irene Joilot-Curie. I hate Robin Klein books.

Books I have enjoyed Gregory Reach for the Sky and Dambusters by Paul Brickhill, The Viking Trilogy and others by Henry Treece, The Three Legions, Outcast and other books by Rosemary Sutcliffe,Tank Commander and others by Ronald Welch, All Creatures Great and Small by James Herriott, The Restaurant at the End of the Universe and others by Douglas Addams, My Friend Flicka by Mary O'Hara, Surely you're Joking by R. Feynman, Snow Treasure by Marie McSwigan, A Story Like the Wind and A Far off Place by Laurens van der Post, Kids for Sail by S & P Bendell, Hard Times in Paradise by M & D Colfax, Maus 1 & 2 by Art Spiegelmann, Car Talk by R. & T. Maglozzi, The Biggles series by W.E. Johns, SAS- Phantom's of the Jungle, Tactics of Success: Cricket, High-Tech Warplanes, The F-16 Fighting Falcon,The Secret House by D. Bodanis, How Things Work by Michael Pollard, The Secrets of Science, Desert Shield to Desert Storm by D. Hiro, Vietnam Fragments by R. Mckay, The Long Range Desert Group, Air Assault, The Worlds Greatest Escapes, Spy in the Sun , Spy Catcher by P Wright, Battle of Britain, Siegfried:the Nazi's Last Stand by C. Whiting, Commandoes in Action, Operation Dragoon, the Invasion of Southern France, Overlord, Flights of the Forgotten by K. A. Merrick, Tunneling into Colditz,The Last Days of Hitler,Tanks, Advance by Ken Tout ,The Green Beret by Saunders,The Trail of the Fox David Irving, The Vilde Affair by Martin Blumenson,Willard Price adventure Books, Helicopters,Treasury of American Humour -assorted authors, Betrayal at Pearl Harbour Nave and Russbridge, Code Name Marianne by Edith Katoma, Glorious Summer by JE Johnson & RB Lucas, The Invasion of Europe by A.A. Michie, Watch for me By Moonlight Evelyn Chene, To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee, King Lear by William Shakespeare,Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA by B Woodward, Spy V Spy: Stalking Soviet Spies in America by R. Kessler, Revolutions and Revolutionaries by AJP Taylor, Super Spy: The Man who infiltrated the Kremlin and the Gestapo by R. Deacon, Hammerhead by D Brown

Books I have enjoyed by Stephen The Ladybird series of history and biography books, Circus Stories series and Secret Seven by Enid Blyton , The Tin Man by Ted Hughes, Woof by Alan Ahlberg, Where's Wally series, Moving into Maps and Mastering Maps by Jacaranda, computer manuals, any sort of puzzle books, not too hard crossword books.

Books/periodicals we have read and are reading to all the children The History of the Earth, Australian Reptiles and Frogs, The Feynman lectures on Physics, National Geographic, Australian Geographic, Scientific American, Best Loved Poems of the American people a range of poetry, Shakespeare, Usborne books, Iliad & Odyssey, Dickens.

Family: Braathen

Children: Roly 8 and Douglas 6yrs

Childrens Interests: Hoon cars, fixing things, farming, architecture, trees, bugs and animals, tennis, gym, basketball, soccer, machinery, building, fluid flow, and computer design

Books they have read: Thomas the Tank- when younger, Pooh Bear books, Arabella's Raven - Peter Corrin collection, any books on machinery, Garfield, Calvin and Hobbs, Asterix is great!(current), any articles or books on animals/dinosaurs.

Books I have read to them: Wind In The Willows - K Grahame, Rudyard Kipling books, Colin Thioele books, some Roald Dahl books, The Black Stallion - W Farley, Wizard of Oz, Chronicles of Narnia - C S Lewis, Series of Story Books - Peter Corrin, Comics - Garfield, Calvin and Hobbs, Asterix, Dr Seuss books, Putrid poems, Petrifying poems - J Coverton, All Right Vegemite series- June Factor, Incredible Cross-Sections - Stephen Biesty's, Inside The Whale - Ted Dewan, Collins Eye Witness Guides - Visual Dictionaries, any books on bridges, cars, motorbikes, trucks etc, Inside Story - (4 books), Tage Voss, Discoverting Astronomy - J & S Mitton, The Universe - Nigel Henbest, Guinness Book of Records, Periodicals : New Scientist, Scientist American, National Geographic, Double Helix, ANH, Zoo Friends, Discovery

Comments: Because my children do not request favourite books (once seems to be enough!) I make great use of the library - generally taking 20 books out on any trip. Without a big research effort at that library, I find it quite difficult to remember all but the most obvious titles/authors!. I personally would like far more 'fiction' books based on real or historical events. The vast majority of books under explo-

Reading the same book over and over ?

Parents sometimes feel worried when their children only want to read the same books over and over. Many homeschoolers have commented on this phenomenon over the years and have noticed that it seems to herald a build up of reading speed and comprehension levels. Often this period can last 12-18 months.

The Pizza Hut Reading Competition

Every year Pizza Hut run a reading competition that offers pizzas as rewards for improved reading - judged by the teacher. Many homeschooling parents have applied for their Family Homeschool and been accepted into this award scheme.

ration, history, geography are dry dusty affairs. I would like a little more human interest or drama in our history. "For the Term of His Natural Life" is a good example (but a little huge for reading out loud for the children!)

Family: Richardson
Children: Fiona 10 & Margot 7 years
Children's interests are: Fiona: Equestrian, piano, languages, cooking, ballet and swimming. **Margot:** Horses, ballet, drama, craft, the sea.
Books they have read: Fiona: Journey to the Centre of the Earth - J Verne, Morris Blechman, Blabber Mouth, Two Weeks, The Queen, Storm Boy - Blue Fin, February Dragon, Colin Thiele books, The Pollyanna Series, Famous Five Series, Little House on the Prairie Series, Hester Brinsmead, Longtime Dreaming, Longtime Passing, Elyne Mitchell series - Moon Filly, Silver Brumby Stallion, Kingfisher, Feather, Colt from Taperoo. **Margot:** Rain Stones - Jackie French, The Giant Devil - Dingo, Turramulli The Giant Quinkin - Dick Roughsey, The Sign of the Sea Horse - Graeme Base, Usborne Puzzle Adventures - Justin Somper, The Enchanted Wood - Enid Blyton, Myths and Legends - Brimax.
Margo's comment "Would like more books about sharks that are not too scary".
Books I have read them: James Herriot series, Coran Island, Gorilla Hunters - R M Ballantyne, Tales from Henty - G A Henty, Tale of Two Cities -Dickens, To The Wild Sky, I Southall, The Penang Pirate - J C Hutcheson, True Blue - W Kingston, Australian Pioneer Women - E Ponnall.
Frances' Comments: Would like more books about Australian families, life through history; The Nancy Cats books are a great read and fairly accurate, but reading Gone With the Wind aloud is sometimes hard going!

Family: Adams
I regularly read to: Jessica 8 years
Age of children I read to irregularly Danny 13 years, Toby 16 years
Outstanding books we have enjoyed: Susan Cooper's Dark is Rising series, Romer Godden: Episode of Sparrows, Patricia Wrightson's Wirrun Trilogy, Ethel Turner's Seven Little Australians & The Family at Misrule, Frances Hodgson Burnett's The Secret Garden, The Katy books, Heidi, Anne of Green Gables, many myths and legends in particular Chinese and North American.
Anna's comment : I do not regularly read to Danny nor Toby, given that they, like me, have their own tastes to indulge (computer magazines, history books, techno thrillers, mediaeval novels (Toby) or humorous, detective, children stories (Danny). I have no interest in this reading matter whatsoever. They are certainly not interested in what I read independently - the philosophical or psychological. But we still share some reading together - information mostly and frequently obtained from newspapers or magazines, though sometimes from books they have read on their own such as How The Universe Changed. There is room for improvement in this area and both boys would benefit from shared and sustained reading of much more complex material.

Are Picture Books Harmful ?

Pamela Protheroe

Pamela Protheroe is a secondary school teacher and author of Vexed Texts: How Children's Picture Books Promote Illiteracy (Book Guild, Sussex). This article is reprinted from The New Scientist and in conjunction with the ABC Lateline program considering the same issue.

[**Greg's Note**: *Pamela's figures in paragraph 1 leave a lot to be desired. Given an average reading age of 16 years old, 50% of 16 year olds are going to be above that level and 50% below that level whatever it is, and statistically 3/5ths (around 30%) of that 50% could be two years or more below, just as 3/5ths of the 50% could be two years or more above. (So the 30% below is no surprise figure but a typical one). The problem should of course be what is the average sixteen year old reading like, NOT how many are below the average.]*

There is a great concern in the West about declining standards of literacy in schools. In Britain, the fact that 30 percent of 16-year-olds have a reading age of 14 or less has helped to prompt massive educational changes.

The development of literacy has far-reaching effects on general intellectual development and thus anything which impedes the development of literacy is a serious matter for all of us. So the hunt is on for the cause of the decline in literacy. The search so far has focused on socioeconomic factors, or the effectiveness of "traditional" verses "modern" teaching techniques.
The fruitless search for the cause of the increase in illiteracy is a tragic example of the aphorism: "They can't see the wood for the trees". When teachers use picture books, they are simply continuing a long-established tradition

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that is accepted without question. And for the past two decades, illustrations in reading primers have become increasingly detailed and obtrusive, while the language has become impoverished - sometimes to the point of extinction.

Amazingly, there is virtually no empirical evidence to support the use of illustrations in teaching reading. However, a great deal of empirical evidence shows that pictures interfere in a damaging way with all aspects of learning to read. Despite this, from North America to the Antipodes, the first books that many school children receive are totally without text.

A teacher's main concern is to help young beginner readers to develop not only the ability to recognise words, but the skills necessary to understand what these words mean. Even if a child is able to read aloud fluently, he or she may not be able to understand much of it: this is called "barking at text". The teacher's task of improving comprehension is made harder by influences outside the classroom. But the adverse effects of such things as television, video games, or limited language experiences at home, can be offset by experiencing "rich" language at school.

Instead, it is not unusual for a book of 30 or more pages to have only one sentence full of repetitive phrases. The artwork is often marvellous, but the pictures make the language redundant, and the children have no need to imagine anything when they read such books. Looking at a picture actively prevents children younger than nine from creating a mental image, and can make it difficult for older children. In order to learn how to comprehend, they need to practise making their own meaning in response to text. They need to have their innate powers of imagination trained.

As they grow older, many children turn aside from books without pictures, and it is a situation made more serious as our culture becomes more visual. It is hard to wean children off picture books when pictures have played a major part throughout their formative reading experiences, and when there is competition for their attention from so many other sources of entertainment. The least intelligent are the most vulnerable, but tests show that even intelligent children are being affected. The response of educators has been to extend the use of pictures in books and to simplify the language, even at senior levels. The universities of Oxford and Cambridge recently held joint conferences to discuss the noticeably rapid decline in literacy among their undergraduates.

Pictures are also used to help motivate children to read because they are beautiful and eye-catching. But motivation to read should be provided by listening to stories well-read, where children imagine in response to the story. Then, as they start to read, they have this experience to help them understand the language. If we present pictures to some children then they may not take the trouble of developing this creative skill. If that is the case then I think we are making a great mistake.

Academic journals ranging from educational research, psychology, language learning, psycholinguistics and so on cite experiments which demonstrate how detrimental pictures are for beginner readers. Here is a brief selection:

The research results of the Canadian educationalist Dale Willows were clear and consistent: pictures affected speed and accuracy and the closer the pictures were to the words, the slower and more inaccurate the child's reading became. She claims that when children come to a word they already know, then the pictures are unnecessary and distracting. If they do not know a word and look to the picture for a clue to its meaning, they may well be misled by aspects of the picture which are not closely related to the meaning of the word they are trying to understand (Journal of Education Psychology, vol 70, no2, p 255).

Jay Samuels, an American educational psychologist, found that poor readers given no pictures learnt significantly more words than those with the pictures. He examined the work of other researchers who had reported problems with the use of pictures and who found that a word without a picture was superior to a word plus a picture. When children were given words and pictures, those who seemed to ignore the pictures and pointed at the words learnt more words than the children who pointed at the pictures, but they still learnt fewer words than the children who had no pictures at all (Review of Education Research, vol 40, no 3, p349 and p397). The conclusion was that pictures, when used as supplements to the printed text, do not aid comprehension in children who are learning to read. Very often these readers have difficulty understanding the pictures.

I know of no research to back up any claims about the positive value of textless books or illustrated readers in developing literacy skills. Not even the idea that they motivate by providing pleasure has ever been tested. From my own research, the observations of those who advocate their use are all anecdotal. I am not suggesting that we use dog-eared, unillustrated reference texts or the abolition of illustrations in children's books. There is a place for beautiful pictures in books for children - but not in the books that are used in the first stages of developing reading skills.

As standards of literacy decline, so the visual appeal of books increases. However, it may be that this very teaching resource is making the problem worse. We cannot continue to ignore the implications.

Development of Literacy?

Anna Adams

Since my first child was a baby some sixteen years ago, there has been a substantial increase in the variety of illustrated children's books now available. I have become quite overwhelmed by the exultation of attractive and often inexpensive picture books shouting at me from the bookstands. The standard of illustration is incredibly high, colours vibrant, exciting images and concepts - delightful characterisations and humorous relationships. Many of them are so captivating they immediately propel the most seriously pre-occupied adult into the world of playful and/or whimsical imagination - books such as Grahame Oakley's Church Mice series.

Oakley's books in particular are a superb example of clever supportive illustration. Having been repelled by stories about rodents, given my phobia, I refused to read my children any book which featured such anthropomorphised creatures, but Oakley's endearing cat, Samson, who had taken an often-regretted vow not to kill even mice, won me over. I have quite happy memories of many a pleasurable hour, in the company of my children, enjoying Oakley's wit and humour expressed with intelligent interaction of text and illustration.

When choosing books for my children as pre-schoolers, I admit that illustration was a major consideration. In general, I preferred complex art work with careful attention to detail to basic crude design. If I didn't find a book interesting or attractive, I certainly wouldn't select it for my child's enjoyment.

Why did I and many other parents choose picture books at all to read to my children? There are various assumptions underlying this choice. I assumed that the pictures would help engage my child to the text - in other words, they would be motivated to read in order to glean the meaning of illustrations. I assumed that when they looked through books I had previously read to them, illustrations would stimulate their memory of the content of the story, including plot development and characterisation. I assumed that illustrations enriched their imagination.

It didn't occur to me that perhaps picture books were not connected to the development of literacy until I heard a debate on Lateline recently. New research suggests strongly that picture books seem to delay the development of reading skills in non readers and actually distract competent readers so much that they read slower, with greater inaccuracy when working with illustrated texts. So it seems that many of my assumptions were wrong.

Naturally, I was inclined to think about whether my own children's' reading history would support this research. My last child is an intelligent, articulate little girl of eight who started reading in the last few months. My first child Toby, who is now sixteen, was reading competently and independently two years earlier at six. Danny who is now thirteen, didn't start reading independently until he was nine. There was a considerable difference in the books these children enjoyed in their early years. Perhaps there was an explanation in this illustrated book debate.

Toby definitely suffered illustration deprivation. I loathed the illustrated books popular when he was young (Dick Bruna and Mr Men comes to mind.) Toby was a very active preschooler. He listened to me read while doing somersaults off the bed, throwing his bear about the room or jumping off the chairs. But I persisted reading to him all the same. By four, he was reading bits and pieces of various books and was well on the way to reading independently. His books were nowhere near as excitingly illustrated as the books to which Danny and Jessica have enjoyed, nor did he spend much time actually looking at pictures. He certainly didn't learn to associate books with pictures but with the spoken word.

Danny and Jessica by contrast, were not physically active preschoolers and they both had access to hundreds of wonderfully illustrated books. They sat with them for hours. This is not to say they didn't enjoy listening to complex novels without illustrations - they listened and are still listening to a wide range of authors such as Godden, Wrightson, Ransome, Cooper, Montgomery, Turner etc. I read and they listened. But their own selections from libraries were enticingly illustrated and I know they weren't chosen for the text. They probably learnt that books were for them, more a source of interesting pictures than the coded spoken word.

Pamela Protheroe, an English educationalist, questions the value of illustrated books in enhancing literacy in her book "Vexed Texts". Her argument, as expressed on Lateline and in the New Scientist article, centres round the proposition that illustration inhibits the development of imagination - which she seemed to define as the ability to create a mental visual image from printed or aural information. Protheroe criticises picture books for their impoverished language usage in creation of mood, atmosphere and character. She says that picture books tie children's imagination to what they can see, rather than extend their ability to create a mental image of what cannot be seen. This ability to create mental images of what cannot be seen is crucial at advanced levels of learning especially in maths and science.

In the same program Dr Robert Solman from the University of NSW stated that concrete scientific research demonstrates clearly that children need nearly twice as many exposures to words accompanied by pictures than, they do if words are presented in isolation, in order to read them independently. So it takes twice as long to learn to read. An explanation for Danny's and Jessica's relatively late reading? What implications does this research have for the homeschooling parent teaching their child to read?

Books serve many different purposes from entertainment to information resources. It seems illustrated books are excellent entertainment - a sort of 'culturally correct' form of baby sitting, (Morris Gleitzman) superior to watching television. But there are increasing doubts as to their suitability or relevance for learning to read.

The acquisition of any skill requires the effort, persistence, and patience - reading included. This does not mean that young children should be required to make great efforts to learn to read, but rather the effort comes from the parents and/or older children reading a wide range of material frequently to the non-reader, probably without the distraction of pictures. As print is an essentially symbolic representation of the spoken word, it is not hard to understand why reading aloud to children is the singularly most important factor in the development of reading skills.

Reading is an extremely sophisticated activity, used for all sorts of purposes - from the transmission of practical information - how to make a cake, fix a car, the emotional stimulation of poetry, the intellectual communication of ideas and concepts through to simple item-passing entertainment. It seems that the content of books can range from the most intellectually demanding to the most mindlessly enjoyable. Illustrated books, while enjoyable, apparently fall into the category of mindless enjoyment. Illustrated books do not encourage children to read, nor probably enhance their ability to create their own mental images.

Apart from simple pleasure, I found it difficult to find research evidence that suggests any worthwhile purpose for illustrations at all. People who strongly advocate the use of visual thinking for the understanding of mathematical, scientific, artistic, philosophical principles do not suggest that even this skill is learnt through illustrated books. Visual thinking is a very complex skill, developed through right brain activities requiring a fine balance of attentive relaxation. Activating this very perceptive state of mind takes time and substantial variety in sensory experiences, not just the visual stimulation of pictures.

This may be co-incidental, but both Danny and Jessica enjoy drawing and draw quite well while Toby could be considered "drawing-disabled". Drawing is essentially a right-brain process while reading is a left brain activity. Danny who used to spend many more hours drawing than reading, had reversed this tendency, now spending more hours reading than drawing. Jessica still prefers to draw rather than read.

Not every individual family will aspire to great heights of literacy, which may be irrelevant to their family's or children's needs. Many families do not wish to observe or participate in intellectual debate of ideas, philosophical, mathematical or scientific, and are quite content to use reading solely for the extension of practical life-skills. Plenty of families find sufficient entertainment in music or art, finding little interest in the printed work. Being an accomplished reader is no more morally or ethically superior than being an accomplished musician, artist or mechanic or electrician. It may be less a case of intellectual superiority and more a case of hemisphere dominance.

It is obvious that despite the years of funded research poured into education, there is still a vast terrain of unresolved minor educational factors eg. phonics versus sight-reading, early versus late development; now illustrated versus text-only books. Nor has there been significant research efforts into the role and importance of the right hemisphere of the brain and until there is, we will probably continue to develop and use only half our brains. But the major factor concerning the development of literacy still remains unchallenged - that the children most likely to become skilled readers are those who live with people who read and who read to them.

Changes to the HSC

Jennie Orchard

Sydney Morning Herald 20th July 1993

Jo-Anne's Note: The question I am asked most frequently is "What about the HSC?" Homeschooling parents and students should remember the HSC is not a prerequisite for entry in to university in this country. Universities are happy to come to other arrangements if presented, early enough, with a well reasoned letter, good portfolio, interview etc. In NSW if you want to find out more about the 'new' HSC contact the Board of Studies on 02 925 8111.

"...... the motivating force for the changes was a perceived need for a more flexible program to cater for students with a wide range of personal and academic circumstances...... From 1994, options will enable students to accelerate their HSC course or to accumulate units for up to five years. Prior studies or work experience may be recognised and substituted for parts of the HSC, distinction courses are to be added to the curriculum for especially gifted students, and the rules governing the choice of HSC subjects are to be changed, enforcing the inclusion of 2-unit English and at least one subject from each of the two key learning groups.....

* Students must select at least 11 units, including two units of English & one unit from each of the two key learning area groups. Grp 1 - science, mathematics, technological and applied studies. Grp 2 - languages other than English, human society and its environment, creative arts, personal development, health and P.E.

* Six of the mandatory 11 units must be from board-developed courses and up to five may be one-unit courses. These requirements need to be met for both the Year 11 Record of Achievement (assessed by the school only) and the HSC, subject to external examination& internal assessment.

In making their choice, students will need to be aware of the criteria affecting the Tertiary Entrance Ranking (TER) and of the requirements of any university or college courses they may want to pursue after leaving school.With regard to the TER, the change is that the marks gained from at least one of the two units of HSC English and a least one unit from each of the two key learning area groups will be included in the overall calculation of the scaled aggregate of the best 10 units. While the majority of the units must be Category A or B.O.S. courses, students may present two units from the more practically oriented Category B subjects- science for life, classical ballet, mathematics in practice, electronics technology, accounts clerical & travel.

* From 1994 it will be possible for Year 11 students to accumulate their 11 HSC units over a period of up to 5 years. This which will make the HSC more accessible to a broader range of students including those who need to support themselves as they study or who are caring for young children, students who want to dovetail their HSC studies with a TAFE course etc.....

* It will be possible to extend the period of HSC studies or undertake an accelerated full or part program. Those who complete their HSC a year in advance might proceed immediately to tertiary educ, travel or work for one year. Students who have accelerated only part of their HSC may combine the second year of their studies with part-time university or college study, or work, undertake additional units from the HSC or choose one of the new distinction courses starting in 1994. While these courses will not be included within the required 11 units of HSC study, they may be counted for the purposes of calculating the TER.

* Some courses undertaken at TAFE etc may be approved for credit towards the HSC. Prior learning/work experience may be sufficient to exempt a student from certain course requirements /assessment tasks in the preliminary Year 11 component of the HSC.

Comments on the proposed HSC changes: Effect on homeschooling?

Julia Boxx

Dr Julia Boxx is a homeschooling mum who is widely read, well informed and has personal experience in this area. A couple of her children have done the HSC as Distance Educ. students and she has a few more to take down that path. We are indebted to her for her comments and insight into this issue. Following is a part of a letter she has sent to the Board of Studies voicing some legitimate concerns about the implementation of the new look HSC. The answers to these questions could have an effect on many of us in the not too distant future.

Having read the "Higher School Certificate Pathways Implementation Guidelines", I have a number of questions regarding the Guidelines for Self-Tuition Candidates. Our children, as homeschooled students, are within this group. As such, it is necessary we fully understand the Board's guidelines and requirements to best prepare them as candidates.........

1. As the Self-Tuition Candidate may now present any number of units for the examination, will this candidate be eligible for a TER even though he remains ineligible for the HSC testamur or the HSC Record of Achievement?
2. The Guidelines state the Self-Tuition Candidate will be eligible to receive a Result Notice. If the candidate is eligible for a TER, will he receive this instead of a Result Notice or in addition to it?

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3. If the Self-Tuition Candidate does not wish to receive a TER (should it be available to him) may he present for the examination and receive a Result Notice without being required to complete satisfactorily the HSC course assessment program (as has been the case)? Or will he now be required to complete satisfactorily the HSC course assessment program to be eligible even to sit HSC examinations in chosen subjects and/or receive a Result Notice?

4. The Self-Tuition Candidate may not receive the HSC testamur or the HSC Record of Achievement. Why and how then (as is noted in item 4.5 of the Guidelines) is he considered to be undertaking the HSC program of study?

5. When in 1993 will the Guidelines (as yet untitled?) explaining the assessment program operation for Self-Tuition Candidates be available, and will there be a consultation document issued first? If the latter is the case, how does one obtain a copy in time to comment if desired? As this document will relate specifically to Self-Tuition Candidates, they ought to be made aware of any consultation document leading to it. This seems particularly important when considering that Self-Tuition Candidates may be required to pay fees for the setting and marking of assessment tasks. I am concerned there is even consideration of fees being levied on one group of students to entitle them to complete requirements to sit exams and obtain secondary school credentials. I hope the Board decides against this proposal, but I trust there will be indisputable rationales provided should it be implemented.

6. What is the Board's policy of Self-Tuition Candidates being eligible to undertake Distinction Courses, sit HSC exams in these courses and be dually credited for their achievements? I hope the Board does not intend to limit Distinction Courses only to students doing coursework through government or non-government schools. Self-Tuitioned Candidates may well be capable of successfully undertaking these courses as well, due either to their life and/or work experiences or, as in the case of many Homeschooled students, their intense interest and ability in a given Distinction Course area.

I look forward to your answers to the questions I pose. I am sure your comments will clarify these issues, thereby enabling us to plan effectively for our children's educational program and to assure their readiness and qualifying for presentation as candidates.

Success in the Eye of the Beholder

Thea Davis

Tuesday, July 6th, 1993 Sydney Morning Herald

"You have not failed, until you fail to try.". These words rang in the back of my mind on the afternoon of January 11, 1993. The day I'd dreaded for months. The day the Higher School Certificate results arrived in households throughout NSW. I had attended a private girls' school for five years and the emphasis had always been on academic achievement. However, not all of us fell into the category of academic achievers. My time as a student had been filled with immense happiness. I had worked hard and achieved to the best of my ability, yet on the afternoon of January 11, 1993, I was to learn a valuable lesson. There is more to education than a mere piece of paper with a number or a series of numbers on it.

I opened the envelope. My life stopped. Teary-eyed and in shock, I realised that I fell into the category of "non-academic achievers". (The mark I had attained was less than half of what I needed to gain entry into my chosen course.) The way I felt was similar to what I imagine a five-year-old would feel if caught stealing a biscuit from the tin.

This year I have undertaken the sort of course I vowed I never would, a secretarial course. Filled with resentment and shame, I began 1993 on the wrong foot. Yet, as a result of not getting into university, I have learnt an invaluable lesson. Achievement six months ago for me took the form of a number on a piece of paper. It was, I presumed, my ticket to happiness and achieving my long-term goals. My vision, as a result, couldn't extend past an examination, which had, in fact, taken two years to complete. Six months later, I am able to recognise that success for many may be totally unrelated to a piece of paper.

The ability to score a goal in a game of hockey or football, or even the apparently simple task of tying a shoelace provides, for some, an immense sense of achievement. Society today places an emphasis on the materialistic education offered to those fortunate enough to receive it, often dismissing what , not so long ago, was considered sufficient for survival in the world. The education of life itself is far more valuable than that which may be offered in an educational institution. The ability to love, to observe and to learn from one's mistakes cannot be "learned" through attendance at even the most renowned educational institutions. The saddest aspect of this, however, is that so many of us are incapable of recognising it. Last year, for me, was filled with the kind of anxiety and stress I hope I never have to experience again.

Several girls with whom I went to school chose to re-sit this appalling examination, yet I ask myself whether such a drastic measure is really necessary? To those of you who are yet to face the stressful two years which the Higher School Certificate entails whether it be in 1994 or 1998, I wish you every success in achieving your goal, and leave you with the kind of advice I wish I'd been given: there is more education available than that which one receives in an educational institution, and the greatest service one can do for oneself is to recognise this.

Houses, Boats, Families and the Business of Homeschooling

John Taylor Gatto

I want to give you a yardstick, a gold standard, by which to measure good schooling. The Shelter Institute of Bath, Maine will teach you how to build a three thousand-square-foot, multi-level Cape Cod home in three weeks, whatever your age. If you stay another week, it will show you how to make your own posts and beams; you'll actually cut them out and set them up. You'll learn wiring, plumbing, insulation, the works. Twenty thousand people have learned how to build a house there for about the cost of one month's tuition in public school. (Call Patsy Hennon at 207-442-7938 and she'll get you started on building your own home.) For just about the same money you can walk down the street in Bath to the Apprentice Shop at the Maine Maritime Museum and sign on for a one-year course (no vacations, forty hours a week) in traditional wooden boat building. The whole tuition is eight hundred dollars, but there's a catch. They won't accept you as a student until you volunteer for two weeks, so they can get to know you and you can judge what it is you're getting into. Now you've invested thirteen months and fifteen hundred dollars and you have a house and a boat. What else would you like to know how to do? How to grow food, make clothes, repair a car, build furniture, sing? Those of you with a historical imagination will recognise Thomas Jefferson's prayer for schooling—that it would teach useful knowledge. Some places do: the best schooling in the United States today is coming out of museums, libraries, and private institutions. If anyone wants to school your kids, hold them to the standard of the Shelter Institute and you'll do fine.

As long as we're questioning public schooling, we should question where there really is an abstraction called "the public" at all, except in the ominous calculations of social engineers. As a boy from the banks of the Monogahela River in western Pennsylvania, I find the term insulting, a cartoon of social reality. If an institution that robs people of their right to self-determination can call itself "public" means it can turn families into agents of the state, making parents spy on and harass their sons and daughters because a schoolteacher tells them to; if the state can steal your home because you can't pay its "public" school taxes, and courts can break up your family if you refuse to allow the state to tell your children what to think—then the word public is a label for people who allow themselves to be treated like slaves.

A few weeks is all that the Shelter Institute asks for to give you a beautiful Cape Cod home; a few months is all Maine Maritime asks for to teach you boat building and rope making, lobstering and sail making, fishing and naval architecture. We have too much schooling, not too little. Hong Kon,g with its short school year, whips Japan in every scientific or mathematical competition. Israel, with its long school year, can't keep up with Flemish Belgium, which has the shortest school year in the world. Somebody's been lying to you. Sweden, a rich, healthy, and beautiful country, with a spectacular reputation for quality in everything won't allow children to enter school before they're seven years old. The total length of Swedish schooling is nine years, not twelve, after which the average Swede runs circles around the over-schooled American. Why don't you know these things? To whose advantage is it that you don't?

When students enrol in a Swedish school, the authorities ask three questions: (1) Why do you want to go to this school? (2) What do you want to gain from the experience? (3) What are you interested in? And they listen to the answers.

Can you build a house or a boat? Can you grow food, make clothing, dig a well, sing a song (your own song, that is), make your children happy, weave a whole life from the everyday world around you? No, you say, you can't? Then listen to me—you have no business with my kid.

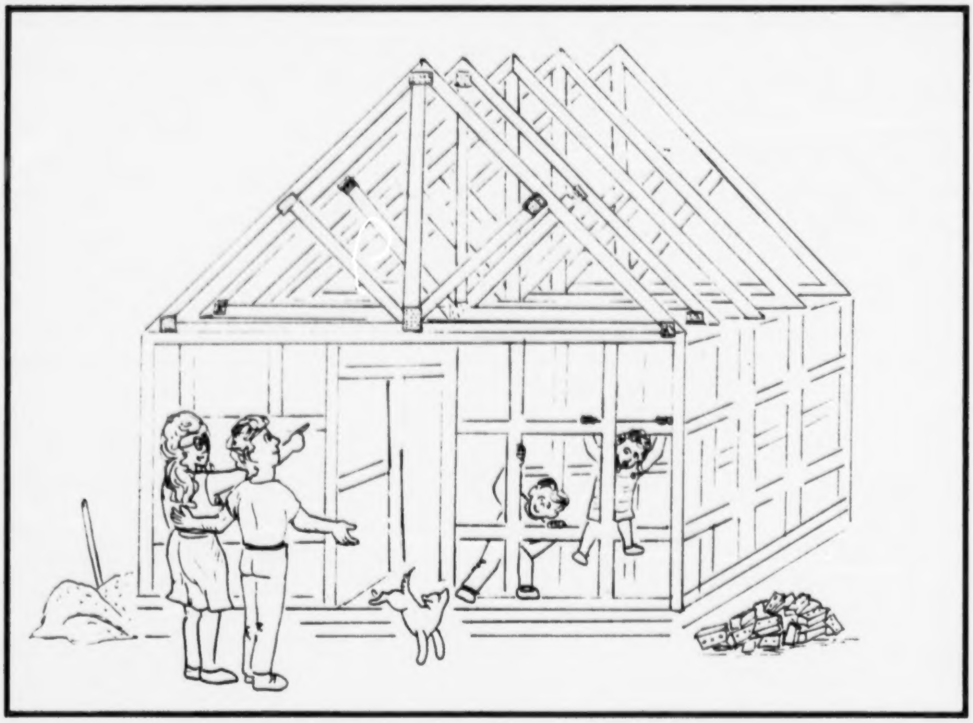
In my own life, with my own children, I'm sorry I lacked the courage to say what Hester Prynne, the wearer of the scarlet letter, said to the Puritan elders when they tried to take away her daughter. Alone and friendless, dirt poor, ringed about by enemies, she said, "Over my dead body." A few weeks ago a young woman called me from Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania to tell me the state had just insisted she stop homeschooling her little girl, Chrissie. The state was going to force her to send Chrissie to school. She said she was going to fight, first with the law, although she didn't know where the money would come from, and then by any means she had. If I had to bet on this young single mother or the State of Pennsylvania to win, I'd bet on the lady because what I really was hearing her say was "Over my dead body." I wish I'd been able to say that when the state came to take my own children . I didn't. But if I'm born again I promise you that's what I will say.

A few days ago I got a call from a newspaper that wanted some advice for parents about how to launch their children into school. All the reporter wanted was sound advice from a former New York State Teacher of the Year. What I said was this:

"Don't cooperate with your children's school unless the school has come to you in person to work out a meeting of the minds—on your turf, not theirs. Only a desperado would blindly trust his children to a collection of untested strangers and hope for the best. Parents and school personel are just plain natural adversaries. One group is trying to make a living; the other is trying to make a work of art called a family. If you allow yourself to be coopted by flattery, seduced with worthless payouts such as special classes or programs, intimidated by Alice in Wonderland titles and degrees, you will become the enemy within the extension of state schooling into your own home. Shame on you if you allow that. Your job is to educate, the schoolteacher's is to school; you work for love, the teacher for money! The interests are radically different, one is an individual thing, the other a collective. You can make your own son or daughter one of a kind if you have the time and will to do so; school can only make them part of a hive, a herd, or and anthill.

Museums and institutes of useful knowledge travel a different road than schools. Consider the difference between librarians and schoolteachers. Librarians are custodians of real books and real readers; schoolteachers are custodians of schoolbooks and indentured readers. Somewhere in the difference is the Rosetta Stone that reveals how education is one thing, schooling another.

Begin with the setting and social arrangement of a library. The ones I've visited all over the country invariably are comfortable and quiet, places where you can read rather than just pretend to read. How important this silence is. Schools are never silent. People of all ages work side-by-side in libraries, not just a pack of age-segregated kids. For some reason, libraries are neither age-segregated nor do they presume to segregate readers by questionable tests of reading ability. Just as the people who decided the secrets of farming or of the forests and oceans were not segregated by age or test scores, the library seems to have intuited that common human judgement is adequate to most learning decisions.



The librarian doesn't tell me what to read, doesn't tell me the sequence of reading I have to follow, doesn't grade my reading. Librarians act as if they trust their customers. The librarian lets me ask my own questions and helps me when I need help, not when the library decides I need it. If I feel like reading in the same place all day long, that seems to be okay with the library. It doesn't tell me to stop reading at regular intervals by ringing a bell in my ear. The library keeps its nose out of my home, too. It doesn't send letters to my mother reporting on my library behaviour; it doesn't make recommendations or issue orders on how I should use my time outside of the library.

The library doesn't have a tracking system . Everyone is mixed together there, and no private files exist detailing my past victories and defeats as a patron. If the books I want are not available, I get them by requesting them - even if that deprives some reader more gifted who comes a minute later. The library doesn't determine which of us is more qualified to read that book; it doesn't play favourites. It is a very class-blind, talent-blind place, appropriately reflecting our historic political ideals in a way that puts schools to shame. The public library isn't into public humiliation the way schools seem to be. It never posts ranked lists of good and bad readers for all to see. Presumably it considers good reading its own reward, not requiring additional accolades, and has resisted the temptation to hold up good reading as a moral goad to bad readers. One of the strangest differences between libraries and schools, in New York City at least, is that you almost never see a kid behaving badly or waving a gun there—even though bad kids have exactly the same access to libraries as good kids do. Bad kids seem to respect libraries, a curious phenomenon which may well be an unconscious response to the automatic respect libraries bestow blindly on everyone. Even people who don't like to read like libraries from time to time; in fact, they are such generally wonderful places I wonder why we haven't made them compulsory — and all alike, of course, too.

Here's another angle to consider. The library never makes predictions about my immediate future based on my past reading habits, nor does it hint that my days will be happier if I read Shakespeare than if I read Barbara Cartland. The library tolerates eccentric reading habits because it realises that free men and women are often very eccentric. And finally, the library has real books, not schoolbooks. Its volumes are not written by collective pens or picked by politically-correct screening committees. Real books conform only to the private curriculum of each writer, not to the invisible curriculum of some German collective agenda. The one exception to this is children's books—but no sensible child ever reads these things, so damage from them is minimal.

Real books are deeply subversive of collectivisation. They are the best known way to escape herd behaviour, because they are vehicles transporting the reader into deep caverns of absolute solitude where nobody else can visit. No two people ever read the same great book. Real books disgust the totalitarian mind because they generate uncontrollable mental growth—and it cannot be monitored!

Television has entered the classroom because it is a collective mechanism and, as such, superior to textbooks; similarly, slides, audio tapes, group games, and so on meet the need to collectivise, which is a central purpose of mass schooling. This is the famous "socialisation" that schools do so well. Schoolbooks on the other hand, are paper tools that reinforce school routines of close-order drill, public mythology, endless surveillance, global ranking, and constant intimidation. That's what the questions at the end of chapters are designed to do, to bring you back to a reality in which you are subordinate. Nobody really expects you to answer those questions, not even the teacher; they work their harm solely by being there. That is their genius. Schoolbooks are a crowd-control device. Only the very innocent and well schooled see any difference between good ones and bad ones; both kinds do the same work. In that respect they are much like television programming, the function of which, as a plug-in narcotic, is infinitely more powerful than any trivial differences between good programs and bad.

Real books educate, schoolbooks school, and thus libraries and library policies are a major clue to the reform of American schooling. When you take the free will and solitude out of education it becomes schooling. You can't have it both ways.

John Taylor Gatto won New York Teacher of the year. He used his acceptance spech for this award as a springboard to question schools as we know them. He is author of The Exhausted School & Dumbing Us Down both available from the John Holt Bookstore

Vision for a new more flexible school system

Geoffrey Maslen

Canberra Times July 14th 1993

In the long history of human kind, school is an aberration. Mass schooling - the idea that all young people should spend a certain period of their lives segregated in a special institution in the company of others of the same age - was an invention of the 19th century. Yet, so woven into the fabric of our lives has the school system become, that we cannot imagine a society without it. We forget, however, how much our notions of schooling have changed.

In most states, the formal education system was created more than a century ago but then was entirely different to that of today. Not all children went to school and not everyone went there every day of the week. Most youngsters dropped out at the end of the primary years and went off to join the adults.

Although still relatively new and subject to profound changes over the years, school now seems secure: more students are staying for a longer time than at any period in our history. Just as universal primary schooling became accepted last century, so, too, has the idea of everyone remaining to year 12. In the 1990s, post-school education is becoming the norm for most young Australians. This is despite the fact that to many young people, school remains an alienating experience. And no wonder. For schools are still places that regiment children, that put them into uniforms, age-grade them in classes no matter what their knowledge, intelligence or maturity, that sit them in rows, looking to the front where an adult, (a talking head in an age of extraordinary electronics!) attempts to daily dose them with what must seem to the kids random bits of knowledge.

Asked about his own schooling, Albert Einstein recalled, "One had to cram all this stuff into one's mind, whether one liked it or not. This coercion had such a deterring effect that after I had passed the final examinations, I found the consideration of any scientific problems distasteful for an entire year." "It is in fact nothing short of a miracle that the modern methods of instruction have not yet entirely strangled the holy curiosity of inquiry." Einstein's "modern methods of instruction", of course, were those of nearly a century ago. But they are the same ones whose virtues are regularly celebrated by conservative critics of today's schools.

> ***"My education was of the most ordinary description, consisting of little more than the rudiments of reading, writing and arithmetic at a common day school. My hours out of school were passed at home and in the street" -Michael***

The kids, however, see it from a different perspective. Their lives are ordered according to the dictates of a timetable - for hour after hour, day after day, year after year. Knowledge, whether it is relevant and interesting, potentially useful or blindingly dull, is parcelled out in 40 minute bits and delivered in most classrooms by the full frontal method of instruction.

Not only does this extended institutionalisation create serious problems of student motivation and discipline, it also makes the transition from the "information - rich, but action-poor" classroom to working life an often traumatic experience. Indeed so removed are many youngsters from the real world outside the school gate that they have only the remotest idea of what their parents actually do. Too few students play a part in adult affairs or are given the opportunity to shoulder adult responsibilities.

In school, the student who successfully masters the rituals is rewarded, while the one who rejects them is not. The evidence is there that schools continue to fail many of their clients - although, in a curious twist, it is the youngsters who a blamed and who get to be labelled failures.

The deschoolers and other opponents of formal education lost the "school-is-dead" debate the decade before. Nevertheless, there are still powerful arguments why school should not continue to exist, at least in its present form.

The "neo-Rousseauians", like Ivan Illich and Paul Goodman, called for the deschooling of society entirely; the neo-Marxists, on the other hand, wanted school preserved but reshaped so as to serve and match society with a new order of production. The conservatives, meantime, kept up their attacks on schools, claiming that "standards", particularly the basics, had been continuously slipping. In the middle of all this teachers went ahead doing the things they have always done. It is a natural enough response. "The past went that-a-way," Marshall McLuhan said. "When faced with a totally new situation, we tend always to attach ourselves to the objects, to the flavour of the most recent past. We look at the present through a rear-view mirror. We march backwards into the future..."

This is not to say that schools have not changed. They have: most are today far more caring, more convivial places than they were in the past. Students do play a greater role in many classrooms and most now have a bigger selection from the curriculum smorgasbord than before. Schools themselves, despite severe budget cuts in several states, are still better equipped, better staffed and better looked after than they were 40 or 50 years ago - although those times seem to be returning.

Society's demands on school have also changed. As well as imparting the basic skills, teachers are expected to shoulder other responsibilities that impinge on student health, sexuality, nutrition, careers, problems - a growing list of roles that extends all the way to safe-driving habits and anti-smoking campaigns.

One of the great puzzles of life, says the American writer Michael Katz, is the faith in the school as an instrument for coping with social problems, despite evidence to the contrary. Along with this attitude is the idea that school should serve in bringing about a more just, more equal society - whereas critics would argue that schools help perpetuate social and class differences. At the same time, school is expected to respond to the demands of the labour market and the requirements of higher education. Instead of being the "great equaliser", school has become the "great sorting machine".

What is needed, then, is a new vision of what school should be about. Such a vision might include:

- Formal full-time schooling for 13 years, but everyone needs to change both in the mode of operation and the years of attendance required. Young people need less schooling of the kind they get at present. They now probably learn more about life and living outside school - especially from television - than they do in the classroom Yet the school takes no account of this. If it is to survive, school must relate more to the world beyond the school gate.
- As a few schools are demonstrating, the magic of the microchip is capable of transforming the way children learn and the way teachers teach. Schools will be sidelined unless they take note and adapt to the amazing technological changes occurring in industry, business and higher education. Computer-based instruction and interactive video-disks are capable of linking the classroom with students around the world and of providing one-to-one tutorials for everyone. The teacher as facilitator will be a reality.
- Lifelong or recurrent education is becoming increasingly accepted as a necessity in a world where people will change their jobs - just as the jobs will change - several times in a working lifetime. Students need to learn adaptability. Yet too much of what students learn in school, and how they learn it, is valueless and they could better spend their time in the workplace or the community at large, sharing school and work.
- The rise of credentialism - the inflation of certificates, diplomas, degrees - whereby people need higher and higher academic qualifications to perform increasingly less skilled jobs - should be resisted. Less emphasis needs to be placed on marks, examination results and certificates and more on the skills young people need to survive on their own, to make their way in the world without institutional props.
- To learn to take responsibility for their own lives, students have to be given more responsibility. They need a greater say in what happens while they are in school and they should be encouraged and helped to work with a wider range of younger and older people. The age-graded classroom is a relic of a bygone era and schools need to experiment again with vertical grouping, more flexible hours and improved links with bodies outside in the community.
- Alternatives to school are needed - now more than ever. We should be experimenting with farm schools, work camps, community service, schools without walls, the city as school.

Paul Goodman, who once described the American high school as a "therapeutic halfway house for the insane", also observed, "More than anything, we need a community and community spirit in which many adults who know something - not only professional teachers - will pay attention to the young". That was written in the '60s but the message still applies today.

[Jo-Anne's Note: Thanks to Jo Boehm for sending this article. I rang and spoke to Geoffrey Maslen, and found out he was involved in setting up and running an alternative school in Melbourne in the seventies and eighties. I am trying to interest him in the potential of homeschooling.]

Legal & Administrative Issues

ACT

From HOMEWORK - Newsletter of The Canberra Home Education Network July-August 1993

A review of home education in the ACT has begun, but it seems nothing will change in the short term. Chris Freudenstein from School Services phoned Claire Powell to request a meeting, having got the name and phone number from the Contact book. Wendy Hodgman and Claire Powell met with Narelle Hargraves, Executive Director of Schools, Black Mt Region & Chris Freudenstein, to talk about a review of ACT Dept of Education policy for home education.

Chris handles all enquires relating to home education in the ACT and Narelle will be conducting the review. They are concerned that the existing policy is not working, having issued only 1 exemption certificate, and see the need to rewrite their policy statement to reflect current home education practice. The legislation will remain unchanged.

Narelle appreciated that home educators would need a positive incentive to register with the Dept, indicating that she would like to make educational resources available to us - school sports facilities, science labs, music programs, foreign language teaching classes were mentioned. She recognises the difficulty of developing policy, which would suit all home education situations and is realistic about not being able to contact/register all families.

Chris is concerned about neglectful parenting and apparently has to field complaints from the public about children who do not go to school. It would be easier for her to answer if these children were on an approved program. After some discussion, she seemed to understand that given the level of commitment necessary to teach children at home, neglectful situations were highly unlikely among home educators. We stressed that sending children to school was by far the easier option for irresponsible parents. These two officers of the Department are sympathetic to teaching out of school, though they take their charge of ensuring that every child receives an education seriously. According to Narelle, the new head of the Dept comes with a strong background in social justice, which makes it likely that she will want to uphold the right of parents to choose the most appropriate education for their children, be that in or out of school.

There was considerable interest in how we arrange our home education, particularly with regard to socialisation, sharing of resources, curricula, etc., and assessment. As Wendy and Claire are not representative of all home educators, so Narelle stressed that others at the same level in the Department were not necessarily of similar mind to her and, of course, personnel in government departments change. There is, therefore, a danger of unsympathetic interpretation of any new policy document, which would need to be very broad to attempt to cover all home education situations.We don't expect anything to change in the short term and feel confident that we will be informed of any changes before they occur. However, this meeting does raise important issues for home educators.

Conclusion

Wendy Hodgman hosted a meeting on Monday, 12th July at Watson, which a variety of people attended, so that there could be discussion.

Jo Boehm told the AHJ that the outcome of the July 12 meeting was that homeschoolers impressed upon the Department people concerned that they did not want any changes to their present situation.

NSW

Board of Studies

Jo-Anne Beirne

In NSW the Board of Studies is the administrative body that handles the registrations for homeschooling and the applications for conscientious objection to registration. (Though the process of inspection and requirements to be met is exactly the same for both registration and conscientious objection). When the Education Reform Act of 1990 was being discussed, we consistently put forward that we were concerned about the possible administration of homeschooling by The Education Department. We felt we had legitimate concerns that officers of the Education Department might try to enforce on NSW homeschoolers standards and requirements that are useful for schools but irrelevant for homeschooling. For us the appointment of The Board of Studies to administer homeschooling was an excellent alternative because this independent body, whose curriculum staff is seconded from different systems has no preconceived ideas of preferred method of schooling.

The use of the term "registration" also became an issue for us when attempting to change the Act. This is because schools in NSW are registered. This registration is the acknowledgement that they are meeting standards and is the same across the board for state and private schools. Homeschoolers in NSW asked to be recognised as registered as well, ie a legitimate alternative to state and private schooling. We objected most strongly to the term "exemption" - because we felt it held the connotation that school was the ideal and we were the ones "opting out". In fact 'registration for homeschooling' did become part of our law and has given us a strong legal base from which to grow.

Homeschooling in NSW is growing well. As more and more people undergo the registration process and find that it is a reasonable procedure to gain 2 years registration, they in turn advise their friends of the wonders of homeschooling and so homeschooling grows. For most homeschoolers the "inspection visit" by Board

Officers raises some initial concerns. (A bit like a visit to the dentist). They know they really want to homeschool and so the visit is very important to them. Will I meet the required standards for house, planned work, record keeping? How do I know what these standards are?

The Application for Registration document sets out the standards and conditions in a detailed way that is easy to understand if you read them carefully. The accompanying Curriculum Guidelines specify what the state requires by law that you teach your children. These are exactly the same requirements that are expected of state and private schools in NSW.

Homeschooling parents come to the registration process from many different perspectives. Some are removing their children from primary and secondary schools, due to concerns about their educational attainments, violence, socialisation etc., some come to homeschooling from a philosophical commitment to family superiority in the field of education, some find that their special needs children just cannot be adequately helped in the system and decide to take on the task themselves etc. Whatever the reasons for homeschooling, the Board of Studies liason officers are required to listen to what parents from a broad range of educational backgrounds and social concerns have to say for themselves and about the education with which they are going to provide their children.

Many of these Board of Studies officers have told me that they are amazed by the diversity and ingenuity of educational programs and the commitment of parents. Obviously some parents are less well prepared than others but the Board of Studies officers are likely to put them in contact with people who can help in a broad sense, in their local area or recommend a shorter registration period, from which most families emerge more confident and capable. From the range of programs I have seen at homeschooling meetings I know that the Board of Studies officers must have their ideas about education stimulated and even challenged on a regular basis.

The guidelines and regulations can be met by a wide range of teaching patterns, so that usually both the Board of Studies officers and the parents can come to reasonable agreement. For example schools are required to ensure that students receive education 5 hours a day, 200 days a year in NSW . Homeschoolers on the other hand are required that their children receive "equivalent" to the school requirement. This was written to allow for the fact that homeschoolers may well cover a body of work in much less time than it takes to be covered in the school situation (due to the unique small group arrangement) and also in recognition of the fact that homeschooling does not just happen 9-3 on school days. I have been collecting some anecdotal information about inspections visits, as well as that which comes into the Australian Homeschool Journal, and the consensus is that homeschooling visits are working really well. There are reasons for homeschoolers' good relations with Board of Studies officers. The persons who are authorised by the Board of Studies to inspect homeschooling families do not, from my observations, come to the job with the aim of "picking holes" in anyone's situation, program or work. They come because the law is specific, homeschooling is an option and the law ensures protection of those people who wish to homeschool. They also come to ensure a basic set of standards that apply in equal measure under the Act to every single school in NSW. There is no requirement in Registration Guidelines that is any more or less than the standards that have been determined by eminent citizens in our NSW community as appropriate for the education of all children in this state. So they do not come to "weed out" and "judge", they merely come to examine your proposal that states that you are fulfilling the guidelines, as you signfied in your Application for Registration.

Obviously, over time, the inspection visits take on different characteristics. The emphasis in a first visit to a family undertaking the education of a six year old will be different to the emphasis in a first visit to a family commencing the education of a 13 year old or a family who has a special needs child or a second visit to a family educating an eight year old.

Many homeschoolers have said, and I concur, that their programs and diaries become much more reflective of the realities of homeschooling as their experience increases. Excellent administration from Don Haddon and now Rosemary Hafner featuring discussion, flexibility and great reasonableness, has meant a level of respect between Board of Studies officers and homeschoolers that will hold us in very good stead in the future. Undoubtedly the calibre and experience of the Board officers has also been to our advantage. One key feature, in my opinion, of this arrangement has also been families defending and negotiating their programs within the provisions of the Act - a peaceful and successful way to

encourage discussion and change.

In attempting to summarise the homeschooling registration process in NSW I am trying to fill in those people who are new to homeschooling about a little of our history since 1990 and inform those who are thinking about homeschooling of the realities of the process. Those people that attend homeschool support group meetings are likely to become self-informed on these issues, but many others who are isolated from such groups may be grateful for this information. If anyone would like to discuss this issue further please use the Australian Homeschool Journal as a forum.

Queensland

The Queensland Home Educator No. 5 August 1993

The Queensland Home Educator has a questionnaire titled **How Would You Like The Law Changed?**

Heather Cleary of MS 283 Mackay Qld 4741 is inviting all individuals and support groups to contribute to a questionnaire before 16th October with a timetable for submissions being November - circulation of copies of submissons to support groups, December - deadline for comment, January- Legal expert commissioned to draft proposal for legal change based on home educators'submissions. March 1994 Proposal published for comment, amended if necessary and republished for comment. (Heather is looking for a lawyer willing and capable to undertake the job of drafting the proposal).

The QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Are you happy with the current legislation for homeschooling in Qld?

2. If not, would you prefer: (a) legislation similar to Victoria's (b) legislation similar to NSW's (c) legislation similar to another state (please specify) (d) legal requirement but with no details specified and no registration (e) legal requirement to register with the Department of education one's intention to home educate but without requirement to specify details. (f) legal requirement to register accompanied by details of proposed program (g) other (please specify)

3. How would you propose the Dept of Educ. fulfills its obligation to ensure that every child receives an education? (a) trust parents (b) trust members of the community to report cases of educational neglect (c) authorise inspectors to visit home educators on receipt of a complaint (d) authorise local principal to visit home educators on receipt of a complaint (e) authorise police, JAB officials to visit family's home on receipt of a complaint (f) assign inspector, local principal, JAB official to visit family's home periodically (g) assign practising home educator to visit family's home periodically (h) other (please specify).

4. If you think it is relevant how would you define an "education"? Should "minimum standards" or "basic subjects" (eg Maths, English) be required by law? How should the education a child at home is receiving be easily assessed? (Please use a separate sheet!)

5. If parents are in conflict with The Depart of Educ. how should this be resolved? (a) by magistrates court (b) by committee appointed by the Dept of Education (c) by special appeals tribunal independent of the Department of Edcuation (d) other (please specify)

6. If parents are deemed not to be meeting their obligation to provide an education for their children, what should the consequences be? (a) no consequences follow (b) parents allowed a "second chance" (c) parents given a probationary period to provide an education (d) support given to parents to enable them to undertake their children's education (e) parents offered services of correspondence course free of charge or on payment of fee (f) parents offered services of registered teacher free of charge or on payment of fee (g) parents required to send their children to school on a part-time basis (h) parents reguired to send their children to school on a full time basis (i) other (please specify).

7. What help should the Dept. of Educ. be legally required to offer home educators? (a) none (b) basic information eg existence of support groups, contact people, newsletters and other self-help (c) access to educational "experts" eg teachers, inspectors, liason officers, remedial teachers, other (please specify) (d) access to teacher and school support centre services (e) access to school libraries, gymnasiums, science laboratories, theatres, by arrangement with school principals (f) access to school specialist activities eg orchestras, drama, music classes, excursions, Arts Council performances (g) financial assistance eg per capita grant, sales tax exemptions, book allowances.

8. Please add any other thoughts you may have on the way home educators and the dept of Educ should deal with each other in the best interests of our families and children. Finally is there any other way that the law could be changed to make home education in Queensland better and easier?

If you want to know more please contact Heather Cleary of MS 283 Mackay Qld 4741.

South Australia

Marrianne Gale
11 Ross Court Reynella, SA

For anyone asking about how homeschooling is in S.A., good question! At the moment, things are in "limbo", which is good on one hand, but frustrating on the other. The Department of Education is currently reviewing the Regulations to the Education Act (which happens every 10 years). Homeschooling is growing pretty rapidly here, so I think that the Dept. is considering what direction they are going to take. We have seen some consistency develop, which has facilitated the process of applying for exemption. However, there are differences in individual inspectors' interpretation of the given guidelines, and some unfortunate communications. To date, I have not heard of any legal action being taken by the Dept. against a family. When I hear what the official guidelines are (they are following 'interim' guidelines at present), I will forward a copy to you for your records.

Homeschooling in the Media

Compiled by Jo-Anne Beirne

Homeschooling continues to have positive, steady coverage in the media.

The Hawkesbury Gazette May 26th, 1993 carried an article by Ainslee Dennis titled **'Young Thespian Makes His Mark'** about McGraths Hill homeschooler Jordan Hammond "............ He doesn't attend school, is fascinated by Shakespeare and is determined to carve a niche for his talent in the Australian acting community...... Ten-year-old Jordan features in "Bedevil". It is one of only 20 Australian films selected for screening at the prestigious Cannes festival. "Bedevil" is a feature length film of three ghost stories directed by Tracey Moffat. Jordan began his acting career two years ago. His portfolio of achievements includes a performance in the ABC medical soap G.P., Life Be In It and Life Education Centre feature films, an Austudy commercial and the play Swimming in the Light. It is the fantasy of acting which attracts Jordan to the stage and camera, and the money. "It is fun. I love being able to be other people. But another good part about acting is the money," Jordan said. Illustrating his point, he told of commercial work he did for the Japanese. "I had to go to Moree and sit in a tractor that was in a field of sunflowers. I got paid $155 an hour to laugh and talk with the two other kids". Jordan and his sister, Althea, have never attended school. Mrs Hammond recently introduced Jordan to Shakespeare's Henry V. "It was amazing: he just loves it. Jordan can recite great sections of the drama".......

The Land Thursday July 29th 1993 featured an article about **Pandora Holliday** and her parents who live at 'Homeleigh' Lucknow titled **Head of The Class : Why Homeschooling is Working.**

".... Kristin Van Brunschot and her husband, John Holliday from "Homeleigh", Lucknow ... utilising the homeschool system to educate their seven-year-old daughter, Pandora, for the past two years. Pandora Holliday is very much like other normal seven year olds...'Academically very bright, Pandora, however, was, socially, very clingy to me, and I don't think it is good to force children away from you when they are not ready,' Kristin said. 'I had to drag her to school, so decided to keep her home and take up the homeschooling option, which suited us well at the time, and has ever since. We don't have formal lessons, and I don't find it necessary, as she is very anxious to learn... She learns about maths because she likes it, and we use money for our maths lessons, which is good for learning decimals and fractions'. Both Pandora and her mother are also learning to play the violin with the first violinist of the London Symphony Orchestra, John Gould, in Orange. 'Most days she plays the violin herself & is responsible enough to know she has to practise,' Kristin said. Homeschooling was a more "whole system" of learning, as children could learn things when they were ready".

Mudgee Guardian 30th July 1993 'Isaac Reaches For The Sky'

Mudgee Year 11 homeschooler, Isaac Boxx has recently returned home from a week long stay at the Australian International Space School in Sydney. Isaac, one of only 60 Year 10 and 11 students selected nation wide by the Australian Science Teachers' Association, described the Space School as a fantastic opportunity to learn more about space science and astronomy and about Australia's role in it. "It was a real honour to be chosen. The lecturers were great and there were really terrific field trips and hands on experience with equipment in the field of space technology," Isaac said. The aims of the Space School, sponsored by the Australian Space Office, are to provide an opportunity for young Australians to meet and work with an astronaut and with some of Australia's finest scientists in the area of space science. The school encourages students to pursue careers in space science and to enable them to meet other students, both within Australia and from overseas, with similar interests in space. Students also attended from New Zealand, Korea, Norway and Japan. Isaac thinks the aims of the School are being well met. "It was great being able to talk with other Australian students and those from other countries about space science," he said. "Another real high point for me was hearing Dr Scully-Powers (Australian astronaut with NASA) lectures and talking with him throughout the week during our trips and activities. "I'd recommend applying for the Space School to anyone interested in space science", Isaac said. Isaac, who describes himself as having 'always been interested in space science and exploration', plans to further his interest and career in this field by studying aerospace engineering at university upon completing his secondary school studies next year.

A personally initiated article by Bev Parton titled **Why a Parent Chooses Homeschooling** was printed in **The Armidale Express** Wednesday, June 23, 1993. The article quoted freely, without acknowledgement, from the introduction section of Getting Started with Homeschooling. It introduced what is to be a regular article for The Armidale Express by Colin Parton, 10yrs. Some of the things Colin said were ".... My brother and I are homeschoolers and I wanted to tell people what homeschoolers in and around Armidale are doing. The most recent project we did was "Ethiopia". We learnt about the people, climate, and its politics. On part of our food study we cooked (and ate) an Ethiopian meal of beef wot and enjara - an Ethiopian bread. The beef wot was spicy but nice. A coincidence occurred when Michael Palin on 'Pole to Pole' travelled through Ethiopia because of the civil war in Sudan. It showed us things about Ethiopia we had read about. I enjoy sport and as a homeschooler we seem to have more time for this. Our sports program is very flexible and we can choose to do a different sport each week. Joseph, another homeschooler, edits a homeschool newsletter which has poems, stories and letters. There are quite a few homeschoolers around Armidale".

The Sydney Morning Herald did a week long feature comparing the relative results, costs and benefits of attending a range of public & private schools. In a piece entitled **'Your Verdict on Our Schools'** August 2nd, 1993 Bernard Zuel, the Herald journalist, wrote "and, of course, some people say "a pox on both your houses" when it comes to education. (Esther Nott had called to say) "the most positive thing I've done for my 11-year-old child is pull him out of the school system". "I am an active member of the growing band of home educators." Mrs Nott said. I am registered with the Board of Studies. You follow your basic curriculum & (in my son's case) many other things as well".

The Courier Mail Aug 3rd, 1993 printed an article (page 3) titled **School Charge Mum Has Case Dismissed**. "Charges against a mother for not sending her children to school were dismissed yesterday but the woman said she would have preferred to have been convicted. Patris Catherine Bon, a 30-year-old widow, of

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Peachester in the Sunshine Coast hinterland, pleaded not guilty to breaching section 57A of the State's Education Act by failing to send her daughter , Miria Bhakti, nine and son, Raymond, six, to the Bardon State School were they were enrolled. Ms Bon, who defended herself, told the Brisbane Magistrates Court yesterday she had notified the school she was relocating to the country and enrolling the children in distance education. Prosecution witness, former Bardon state primary school principal William McClintock, said in evidence he believed the children were not legally enrolled at the school. This prompted prosecutor Constable Mark Sprenger to ask to amend the charges and prosecute Ms Bon for not enrolling her children at the school. Magistrate Robert O'Sullivan dismissed the application and the charges, saying even though Ms Bon had in her evidence and submissions infact admitted she was guilty of the charges - in spite of her formal not guilty plea- that did not absolve the prosecution from the responsibility of proving all elements. Ms Bon told the court she received formal written confirmation last week her children were enrolled in the School of Distance Education. She was not a home schooling advocate and had only wanted to be able to transfer her children to the School of Distance Education. "I was caught in a cumbersome and only partially effective law. I don't disagree with compulsory education," she said. Ms Bon told the court Juvenile Aid Bureau police had threatened to have her children removed from her care if she continued to refuse to send them to school. But Constables Marcus Elder and Ian Hansen denied the allegation saying they had only warned Ms Bon that a summons would be taken out against her if she didn't send her children to school in the next week. Ms Bon told the court that her defence throughout the six month-long legal wrangle had been that "the best interests of the children have been foremost at heart".

A great double page spread on pages 10 and 11 of **The Northern Daily Leader Weekend Magazine,** Saturday July 31st, 1993 by Kate Pretty featured really good quality information on homeschooling from a variety of sources while also showing the diversity within homeschooling. It included pictures of Cherie Gaites from Tamworth, The Hardy family from Armidale and Neil Mierendorff (North West BOSLO). There was also interesting comment by New England University honorary consultant in education studies Margaret Mackie who said "The concept of home schooling is not really so radical" "Universal schooling was originally introduced by religious organisations to tame people and formalise restraints on behaviour," "Before then generations of people were educated at home." .." said children could learn more at home than at school - if they were really interested and motivated". "The individual attention means they can learn so much more where, at a regular school, a lot of time is spent on things like just getting the class quiet," she said.

The Northern Daily Leader cont'd

The piece about **Cherie Gaites** in the article was titled **'Program Adjusted To Suit The Child'** - and said in part "Eleven-year-old Cherie Gaites and her teacher Dorothy Long came in from the lesson singing and laughing. They had been out walking - which Dorothy says is the best way to learn and exercise at the same time - and they carried pine cones for an art project, packets of seeds for a gardening project and lots of new ideas for the design of a new guinea pig hutch. "We work out in the open air because we get bogged down sitting inside," Dorothy said. "Cherie's not a child who sits at a desk and learns, but she'll learn anything while we're walking. That's the value of home schooling - we can adjust the program to suit the child, so we walk and we talk and we learn."…. Mrs Gaites said she was thrilled with Cherie's progress and happiness. She said her daughter kept in contact with her peers through skating and ballet and, if she decided to attend a regular high school, her training with Dorothy would have prepared her to cope..."I could see this little person not making very much progress and I thought there must be something better," Dorothy said. "Cherie was bright and alert but she wasn't getting there and it's no good continuing at Year 5 if your problem was something you didn't pick up back in Year 2. "Home schooling gives you a chance to develop the bits that are wrong and maximise particular strengths and interests." Dorothy said she used Cherie's interest in the stage or in sewing or animals ... "You won't teach a child to read unless it's interesting to them," "But give a ballet kid a ballet book or a horse kid a horse book and they'll read it even if it kills them". .. she worked out how much material she would need, measured it, cut it and sewed it herself, using mathematical skills without realising it. "Our latest maths project is making a guinea pig cage," ... "We do the shopping very slowly and carefully and Cherie does the banking. "These are all things to give her hands-on experience with maths because maths on paper doesn't go down very well with her," ".. every child is different," she said. "That's what's wrong with regular school - at some point someone decides all kids should have reached a certain level. And you just can't just decide when a person is going to learn something."

The Northern Daily Leader cont'd

The piece on the Hardy Family was titled **'"Its Just Wonderful" - Advantages make the enormous effort worthwhile'.** Janelle Hardy said...."As their teacher and their mother, I'm the one who cares about my children more than anyone else. "It brings whole family together, the kids are a lot happier and they're not exhausted after a long day in the environment of a school." "At school they are told when they will study a subject and for so long at a particular time. "But when is a child really ready to learn something? Why should a child at a particular time and day have achieved something? We're always growing and always learning... "it's got to come from the child, draw on the child's own personal interests and strengths and be relevant to them. "That's where the motivation comes from."

Homeschooling on Radio and TV

2GB & The Domain

Robyn Wigmore of Forestville had around 12 minutes air time recently on Brian Wilshire's 2GB evening talkback program. She was part of a phone in (with prizes) where people talked on the topic 'How can you and I Help to Make Australia a better Place' Using some inspiration from the book Famous Homeschoolers Robyn said she was able to put forward a lot of arguments that suggested homeschooling in a multitude of ways could help make Australia a beter place. Robyn won her section and as a result was invited to speak in front of 500 in the Domain on 24th July. She didn't win this part of the competition but felt it really put her on the road to a major committment to the media.

NBN & PRIME TV

As a result in part of the article in The Northern Daily Leader The Hardy Family were seen on an NBN and in a Prime News feature on July 22nd. The voice over comment was "If you don't like kissing your kids goodbye then maybe this is for you!". Janelle reported that she was really happy with the interview and the time span they gave to the issue.

Education in the Media

Compiled by Jo-Anne Beirne

Jump in Tertiary Educated - Thousands on Dole The Courier-Mail, 25.6.93

The number of people with post-school qualifications has jumped 21 percent in the past five years but thousands are not using their extra training. Figures released showed 35,100 degree holders were working as labourers, drivers and machine operators in February. This was almost 10,000 more than the figure in 1990. On top of this, the recession had increased the unemployment rate for people with trade qualifications from 3.6 percent in February 1990 to 9.6 percent in February this year. The unemployment rate for people without post-school qualifications jumped from 8.8 percent to 14.8 percent over the same period. The number of employed people with extra qualifications was up 18 percent over 5 years while those without qualifications were down 6 percent. There was a big increase in qualified people who were neither working nor looking for a job. In the past year alone, people in this category with post-school qualifications jumped by 87,300 (or 10 percent) to 989,100.

Will Schools fail the test of the Future? Courier-Mail 27.6.1993

Schools in the 1990s have been given the impossible task - to teach a generation skills that will help them use knowledge not even invented yet.. Change itself, the push to succeed and the number of students staying at school rather than joining the dole queues, have put the education system under pressure. Some classrooms are bursting at the seams trying to hold the senior school students who would leave in normal economic conditions. Teachers complain that their time is stretched thin, giving them little chance to upgrade their skills. And overhanging all this is the constant squeeze on funds. Schools - like hospitals, prisons and railways - have to queue for their share of the tax pool. Education is one of the biggest financial commitments governments make to their taxpayers. In Queensland last year, $2.8 billion was spent on education, making the Education Department the state's biggest public sector spender. The money paid the way for the 547,300 students in the state's school systems. Nationally, money for schools and education is increasing as Australia pushes to become the 'clever country' of the Asian region, building on an advantage it already has....Employers complain that students fresh from school don't suit their needs. A recent Queensland Confederation of Industry survey found 86 percent of bosses did not think schools were producing students suited to industry. A similar poll five years ago produced the same result. Survey respondents repeated their view that schools should teach more basic skills - not just English and mathematics, but work-related subjects. One employer said: "I find it incredible that, after 12 years of school students are still classified as unskilled labour."... QCI general manager Clive Bubb said the survey results showed a frustration with a system which did not accommodate the different needs of academic achievers and those who would go straight to work. "Essentially what they are saying is that the system should stream out those who are not going to follow an academic career and give them some different skills," he said. ...Ask the academics if there is a problem and they say society merely expects more and leaves fewer options for poorly skilled people. In the past the less-bright students found a job in the family business or joined a factory production line. Those jobs are drying up and by the time children who are starting high school now are ready to enter the workforce, the technology they are learning will have been superseded. Many of the jobs they will be doing simply don't exist yet. Academics agree the emphasis needs to be on developing a lifelong love of learning rather than memorising particular facts and bodies of knowledge which will soon be outdated. Many are opposed to what they see as a growing trend of linking educational objectives to the economy - a trend which has seen federal influence in education growing steadily since 1973. Dean of Education at Griffith University, Prof Phil Meade, said surrounding communities could be one of a school's greatest assets. More interaction between business and parents made it easier for students to make the transition from school to the real world. He is confident the system will work but recognises that principals need money they can spend on specific school tasks. "There's a chance that in the long term we will end up with a better system....". Professor Meade said.

Alarm at Primary Schools Violence Sun Herald 27.6.93 Karen Davey

A probe of 100 schools has revealed a disturbing increase in violence and aggression by pupils at primary schools. The survey of teachers at high schools, primary schools and pre-schools, conducted by the ACT Department of Education, was prompted by complaints from teachers of an increasing incidence of verbal and physical abuse by pupils. Experts believe this rise in violence in Canberra primary schools may be reflected in similar schools in NSW. Fiona McGregor, of the ACT Australian Teachers Union, said first impressions of the survey data showed that "there were more incidents in primary schools than anyone had ever imagined". "It appears there are young children who are coming into our schools with very challenging behaviour," she said.

Boys copy video terror Craig Henderson Daily Telegraph 26.7.93

Violent, sex-based videos, video games and movies are causing boys to sexually harass girls at school, the Australian Teachers Union claims. Even very young students are desensitised to violence by the sheer quantity they are exposed to through media, TV and videos, according to the ATU. It has told a federal parliamentary inquiry that the effects violent video games have on children and the values they might instill in boys is of particular concern. "...dominated by violent acts," says a union submission to the inquiry into violence in schools. "Video and computer games are possibly of even more concern because of their interactive nature. "much of this violence is sexual and sex-based in nature." The submission urges the Government to limit children's viewing times and access to violent video games. The ATU claims harassment of girls and some "minority groups" is an issue of concern often overshadowed by more dramatic incidents of schoolyard violence.

Single-Sex Classes: The Girls love Them Sydney Morning Herald 28.7.93 Bernard Zuel

.... A major survey of boys and girls in segregated Year 9 maths and science classes has found that the girls felt they would benefit from segregation in other subjects as well. But the boys could not see the point. The survey was conducted among more than 400 students at three North Coast comprehensive high schools by Mr Les Regan, a senior lecturer in education at the University of New England, and Mr Peter Tucker, a teacher. "By and large the boys disagreed with the single-sex classes," Mr Regan said yesterday. "The boys didn't enjoy the separation, saw no change in their work and, in essence, couldn't see what the problem was with mixed classes." But the girls voted overwhelmingly in support. "Girls from single-sex classes reported their work improved, there were more chances to ask questions and more access to equipment," .. Teachers, of whom 18 were men, made almost identical comments to the girls. Ms Goleby (Balmain High) said one major difference was in the teaching, which was more activity-based & "more relevant to life" than the theoretical approach favoured by boys. More important .. is whether the basis of that teaching - like the curriculum - is oriented to boys' preferences for abstract, rather than contextual, thinking.

Distance Ed Kids Way Ahead - Cairns Post, 19.7.93 M. Zlorkowski

Distance education used by isolated children in remote parts of Australia would become the way of learning for the future, international author Dale Spender predicted in Cairns on the weekend. Dr Spender, speaking at an Education Department regional conference on Literacy, said Outback children who have learned from a variety of electronic media were already "streets ahead" of their classroom-bound city cousins.

The Sydney Morning Herald Sian Powell 6.8.1993 Bullies Torment One in Ten Pupils: Study

At least ten per cent of school children are bullied more than once a week and many endure the harassment silently for fear of retaliation, a study has found. The study, which canvassed 7,000 students found that frequent bullying (once a week or more) was reported by 17% of primary school boys, 12 % of secondary schoolboys and 10% of both secondary and primary school girls. One of its authors Professor Phillip Slee, a lecturer in human development at Flinders University said bullying had a dramatic effect on children and could affect attendance at school. About a fifth of the bullied children said they were afraid to report the bullying to a teacher or school counsellor, mostly because they feared retribution but partly because they felt it would not produce results. The study, by researchers from Flinders University and the University of S.A. surveyed children from 26 government, Catholic and independent schools. ..."it's part of the hidden curriculum of schools" Professor Slee said "We're taking children and by law telling them they have to go to school and work in groups in a highly artifical situation. We bring together a whole range of individuals who may be highly different and, in some magical way, expect them to get on with one another"....." Overseas research has found that bullying impairs the ability to form stable relationships in later life" "A study in South Australia found that victims of bullying were more likely to be tolerant of spouse abuse. Females tend to believe they must have deserved the abuse and males tend to believe they ahve the right to hit their wives."...........

In the interests of fairness

Why do I homeschool?

Ian Howie

Reprinted from The Home Schooler, No 2.

Jo-Anne's Note: I hope this will be an irregular part of the Australian Homeschool Journal ! But after this article it had to be done!

Ever asked that question? You know - you are halfway through establishing some vital concept and the phone rings, or the timer in the kitchen goes off, or the kid who was feeling lousy this morning brings back the breakfast you hoped would stay put.

Why do I do this? Or perhaps, for some, why are you contemplating doing it? In reality there are many reasons why families decide that home schooling is the best way to go. What is important is that you made the decision for the right reasons.

However, it is not reasons for your decision that I wish to consider. Rather it is the potential benefit in what you are attempting and some of the inherent dangers. The secret of the real benefits of homeschooling lies in the congruency of the learning and teaching models that the homeschool can provide. However, it is in this same area that the potential problems also lurk.

So what are we talking about? Put simply, the most effective learning experience is that which ensures that the teacher teaches in a manner which reflects the way the child learns. Children do not learn most effectively by just hearing or seeing but by being totally immersed in the experience from which we wish them to learn.

Take, for example, the young child beginning to comprehend language. Most of our children are immersed in an environment rich with language. They hear people conversing all around them, they even have people talking to them long before the words those people say make any sense.

Once the child begins to attempt his/her first words he/she is encouraged, supported, and rewarded for the attempt. The response from the parents is usually very warm and loving, yet it has a measure of gentle correction built in. What we have here is a learning model which includes immersion, expectation of success, reward, correction, support and love.

The way the child learns is supported by the way the adults around teach - complete congruence between the learning and teaching models. The homeschool is the perfect setting for this to continue - so good, in fact, that the new South Pacific Division Primary Curriculum uses it as a model for the church schools of the future.

However, as the child reaches school age we can no longer leave the learning experiences the home offers to chance, because most of the complete learning opportunities that your home provides have been exploited by this time.

cont'd from pg 44

We must be very careful in planning learning experiences for our children. I have spoken with many groups of homeschool parents over the years and I am always concerned that there are some, fortunately only a few, who feel that home schooling is just a matter of letting the child grow. We rarely allow the growth of a tree to be directed by the forces of nature, why then would we allow such for a child?

Homeschooling provides a natural setting for learning, but it also brings with it great responsibilities. It demands much careful thought, detailed planning and specific goals. It requires the support and advice of others who have gone before and those with a sound knowledge of a child's needs.

It is not enough in our complex world to simply say, "I am a parent, I should know what is best for my child." You should, but you might not. Just like the best professionals in any field the homeschooling parent needs to be willing to admit his/her areas of weakness, to acknowledge what is unknown and to accept that there may be professionals in the area who can provide good support.

Which brings us back to reasons. You need to examine your reasons for home schooling very carefully. It provides a powerful learning environment. Rightly used and carefully balanced you can achieve great things with your children. Wrongly used it can do considerable harm.

Rightly used you have little to fear, because you will seek advice, you will welcome any support the state offers, and equally important, you will recognise when your home can no longer provide the environment that is needed to achieve your goals.

Take the time to examine again your motives for teaching your own children and be sure that they all relate to the potential benefit to the child and not to some sort of need for personal satisfaction which will leave you blind to the potential dangers such a powerful learning environment brings with it.

A response to Ian Howie's article

by Jo-Anne Beirne

Does homeschooling need to be pre-planned and does a parent really know what is best for their child?

***Jo-Anne's Note**: Despite the title 'Why do I homeschool? Ian Howie is not a homeschooling parent. Ian Howie is curriculum development officer in the primary area for the Adventist School System. Although this article is a severe criticism of some of the content of Ian's article, no disrespect or personal criticism is intended to Ian Howie. I am well aware that Ian is extremely supportive of homeschooling on a personal & professional level . My criticism of his article is intended only to question Ian's expertise in the area of homeschooling. (Quotations in italics are directly from Ian's article.)*

There is an increasing tendency of "school-experts" both here and in America to make unfounded, unresearched and inexperienced comments about homeschooling. This sort of misinformation needs to be dispelled before it becomes commonplace in the academic fraternity. It is also dangerous for potential and new homeschoolers to be fed meaningless educational jargon, before they have the opportunity to consider "the realities" of actually homeschooling.

No inherent dangers

Ian Howie's article rests on the recurrent theme of the *"inherent dangers"* of homeschooling. What are these inherent dangers and why do they remain unspecified? Are they akin to the inherent dangers of schools ? Including the danger that you could end up illiterate and innumerate, the danger that you could end up unemployed after 12 long years of education, the danger that your education may not have given you any real skills to participate in the workforce, the danger that in forgetting to educate the total person (rather than just your mind) schools have made it hard for you to have a successful marriage and be happy in your life, not to mention the very real danger that you will be physically, emotionally and psychologically abused in your school career by teachers and the peer group.

Ian talks about the *"lurking potential dangers"* for homeschoolers in underestimating *"the congruency of the learning and teaching models"*. This is gobbledegook, meant to suggest some great understanding homeschoolers cannot easily attain. In fact teachers are completely unable to create congruency between the "teaching and learning models" in the school system. They can only teach, as they are paid to do and HOPE that learning occurs. Teachers' further employment and promotion does not in any way depend on children learning what syllabi demand & teachers teach, nor is the system considered a failure if a child fails to learn or thrive - rather the blame is placed squarely at the feet of the child - an incongruent result wouldn't you say?

Most effective learning

In paragraph four Ian makes the point *"the most effective learning experience is that which ensures that the teacher teaches in a manner which reflects the way the child learns"* (perhaps this is his definition of congruency?). One wonders how anyone can presume to say that a teacher in the average classroom can possibly expect to teach in a manner which reflects the way any individual child learns? Much research has shown that teachers teach to expectations. For example when told that a group of children are slow learners, a teacher will treat the class this way no matter what happens in the interaction of the classroom. Slow learners labelled bright on the other hand were treated by teachers as if they were talented. In fact in the average classroom where a school student gets less than 7 minutes of individualised time in a week, it is a blatant lie to say that teachers teach in a *"manner which reflects the way the child learns"* and to exhort homeschoolers to pursue this 'ideal'.

Virtues of the home

Ian goes on to extoll the virtues of the home environment for language learning as an example of *"immersion, expectation of success, reward, correction, support and love"*. He is 100% right on this issue, however, Ian and I diverge violently with his comment (paragraph 9) that *"most of the complete learning opportunities your home provides have been exploited by this time"* (school age). The fact is that immersion, expectation of success, reward, correction, support and love never run out in the home at any age. Sixty year old parents still provide for their married children exactly this kind of feedback about everything they do in their lives - this is the nature of family.

In terms of learning opportuntities the average home has a fully equipped science lab (kitchen), a potential botany, biology field (backyard), a workshop (garage), media resources (TV, video and radio) that can be tuned into appropriate programs any time of the day to extend, challenge and reinforce learning, plenty of room to contemplate, set things up, make models, design. The home provides security yet flexibility, room to move, make noise, generate enthusiasm, activity and full time interactions, yet providing a perfect situation for solitude, research and reading; unique access to the community, through museums, libraries, classes, business, in fact "immersion" "real life" with all its responsibilities, challenges, ups and downs. Most importantly, in terms of the possibilities of extending that learning environment, a homeschooled child has the one to one attention of an attentive adult who cares immensely about the total welfare of that child and tirelessly welcomes questions, research, individuality and challenges while providing feedback and appropriate work.

The average classroom, on the other hand allows about 2-3 sq metres per child (in a class of thirty). Where is the immersion component in the standard school timetable, in the boring classroom ? Where is "*expectation of success, reward, correction, support and love*" *f*or any but the favoured few? Instead we find timetables and requirements that limit movement, access to the community, questioning and creativity. Sure there is a library, TVs, computers, videos etc but they are shared with hundreds of others in the school. Think about the child who understood within 10 minutes the day's programmed maths *"pre-planned and specific"* though it was, and sits there bored. Have a care for the child who didn't understand the work but will be forced to move on regardless as the "pre-planning" requires.The curriculum is set up by academics, in consultation with teachers, but in isolation from the individuals who are destined to be taught.

As for Ian's comment about his concerns that homeschooling parents may just consider *"letting the child grow and that we rarely allow trees to just grow"* this is such a poor analogy it is hard to know where to start. I am yet to see millions of workers out there clipping the trees in the Amazon, or any forest in fact. Allowing trees to fulfill their genetic blueprint and 'just grow' is one of the things that we do in fact do in our society. Sure some trees are cultivated and pruned for food crops bu they are by far in the minority. Ian's concern about "just letting the child grow" would be well-founded if that meant leaving them out on the streets to fend for themselves. However just *"letting the child grow "* in the home is a whole different matter. In fact the family, in fulfilling Ian's early observation of providing *"immersion, expectation of success, reward, correction, support and love"* is educating their children far beyond what any school, with their pre-planned, pruning schedule could ever hope to do. Families educate the heart, mind and spirit of the child, not just their brains.

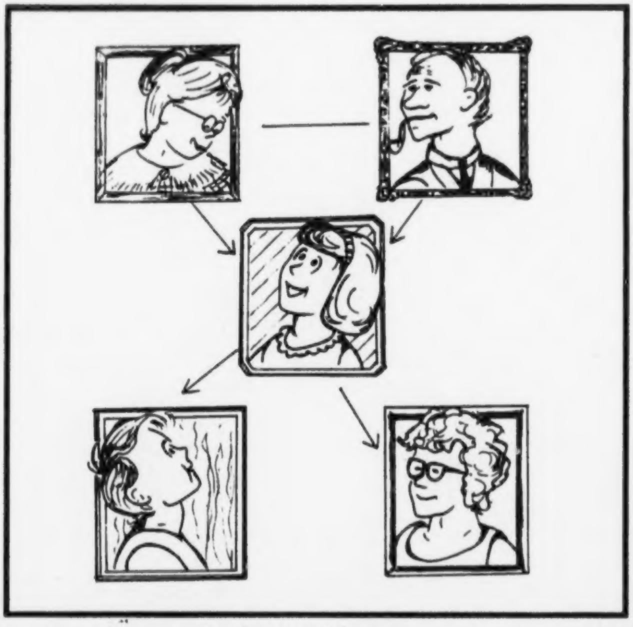
Flexibility not planning

It is also my belief that homeschooling does not in fact require *"careful thought, detailed planning and specific goals"* as Ian Howie asserts. Quite the contrary, if we are to fulfill Ian's exhortation *"to teach(es) in a manner which reflects the way the child learns"* homeschoolers must be highly responsive to the moment and the child and committed to supreme flexibility. Pre-planning in the homeschool is limiting, frustrating and likely to cause burn out. It has been my experience and the experience of many other homeschoolers that "specific goals" that are essential for the classroom are almost entirely unnecessary in the home.

Language/Life/ Learning

It is recognised that for humans one of the greatest learning achievements we will ever attain is the learning of our own language. Which we all did, barring disabilities, before we turned five years old without special programs or specific goals. Why should reading, science, maths, history and geography be any different ? Given a warm, responsive environment all learning can mirror language learning. It has been consistently my experience over the last five years that committed, responsive, loving parents with no "official" educational background or knowledge are capable of becoming the most powerful facilitators of their child's learning while fulfilling none of the paperwork nor criteria that the schools use to measure success or failure of teacher or student.

In my experience it is extremely limiting to have detailed "pre-planning" in the homeschool for many, many reasons including the following: technology and learning are advancing at such a pace that the textbooks (the pre-planners bible) are often ten years out of date; we just do not know what our children will need to know in the future (computer skills held by 12 year olds in 1993 were unknown to University professors just 5 years ago); just "covering" the pre-planning does not guarantee that anything is learnt; the preponderance of cultural and educational resources in the community and the home which will not be accessed to the level they deserve unless you have the flexibility to seek them out and use them. Homeschools do not, and should not, want to mimic what is appropriate and what works for the institution of school.



Who is ultimately responsible?

Ian says *"it is not enough in our complex world to simply say 'I am the parent, I should know what is best for my child'"* (paragraph 11). This comment raises a lot of important issues . Firstly, who does Ian think should take the responsibility for knowing what is right for the child if the parent doesn't ? Do teachers, schools, the church, the government, the media or the children themselves have this responsibility? Should we share this responsibility among all these agencies? Secondly, one is very tempted to say that if our world is so complex that parents can no longer take responsibility for their children then it is the world that has the problem, not the family. Of course many people would say "But what about 'bad' parents?" There certainly are some bad parents but then again there are also bad welfare agencies, teachers, schools, relatives, friends, pressures, influences, politicians...... and society is still based on its most effective unit, the family. If we remove the family's responsibilities to the child, as schools and professionals have been doing so effectively for some decades, we dictate our own ruin.

Family- the basic unit of society

Ian Howie tells homeschoolers to *"examine their reasons"* for homeschooling carefully and make sure their homeschooling is *"rightly used and carefully balanced"* . I am quite sure that schools cannot and do not take the level of responsibility for all their pupils that Ian presumes homeschoolers may not. Some of us are very tempted to ask, after reflecting on declining academic standards in schools, racism, sexism and the escalating crime statistics, whether in fact it is at all possible (far less rightly used and carefully balanced) for one adult to educate and socialise 30 children with different backgrounds, morals, learning abilities, aspirations and interests ?

Satisfaction & enjoyment

I am really disappointed to read Mr Howie's comment that parents should not choose homeschooling for their children for their *"own personal satisfaction"*. It is my strong conviction that a parent who chooses to homeschool for their own personal satisfaction is much more likely to provide their child with the best possible education spiritually, socially, morally and academically. Truly great teachers want the very best for their students, but they don't teach to prostitute themselves to their student's learning, rather they teach because they love their job and because it gives them great personal satisfaction to explain, explore, clarify and encourage the child's learning.

A powerful learning environment

Homeschooling certainly is a powerful learning environment, as Ian Howie states. It is empowered by the fact that it is happening in the family, that parents are taking total responsibility for facilitating their children's academic, social and moral development - this is why it will always be most effective for children. Homeschoolers are working at the coalface of education in an atmosphere of discovery that is broad and unlimited by the strictures the school system must face. Homeschoolers do not need paternalistic, ignorant warnings about what they should and shouldn't do or think in their own homes with their own children.

In defence of television

Jo-Anne Beirne

I have spoken to many home-schooling parents who tell me proudly that they have "given away" their televisions. They say that television is potentially an addictive and destructive medium that threatens their children's moral development as well as wasting a great deal of their precious learning time. While I can see strong points in these arguments and would strongly support the idea that there is indeed a huge amount of "junk" on television that children (and adults) should not be watching, I do believe that totally removing the television is a little like throwing the baby out with the bathwater and is depriving the family of a very potent and useful tool.

Education Resource

Presently there are a great number of programs on the ABC, SBS and sometimes commercial channels that provide information on a huge variety of topics from a diverse number of sources. These programs pride themselves on the quality, immediacy and technical information they provide. If, for example, you are learning about the arctic and polar bears, you will never get out of a textbook what you would have seen in the recent five TV shows on ABC Sunday night about the topic. Or if you are studying the Middle East you will undoubtedly be better informed if you saw the two part program TimeWatch on SBS, Monday nights at 7.30. In the first show we found out about the history of the Middle East, the settling of the Jewish homeland, the work of Ben Gurion, the effect on the Arabs, the British presence, Nasser, the Suez canal crisis and nationalisation. There were newsreels of speeches by the leaders then, comments by relevant analysts working at the time, and from hindsight; and heaps of interesting facts and figures. The sheer volume of information would have taken days to cover in a classroom or from a textbook and the ability to present it in context and with visual aids such as maps and computer simulations etc. meant that it was much more likely to create an impact that set a good basis for more research and learning.

Quality and bias

Many people worry, rightly, about the objectivity of television programs but of course they are no less or more objective than a textbook. Each textbook, like each radio or TVprogram, carries the bias of its maker. However television is such a "hungry for programs" medium that it is likely you will see an alternative to the view you once saw, in the not too distant future. Despite the "junk" screened much of the time by TV stations we have not "thrown out the TV" in our house. Instead we watch suitable programs on a regular basis with our children. Flexibility in this area is enabled through the judicious use of our video.

Supervision

WeO watch TV programs with our children for a couple of reasons. Firstly we know that whatever comes up in a TV program whether it be about the horrors of the Holocaust, the climbing of a great mountain, or the death of a young child we are going to be able to put the information, and the issues that arise, into a context relevant for our children. Secondly, Greg and I are interested in world history, economics, politics and scientific discoveries. We believe that only with a good overview and knowledge of what has happened in the past and what is happening now, can our society make intelligent and just decisions for the future. Thirdly, we have found that the multi-dimensional visual information presented on TV seems to be incorporated into our brains more efficiently than textbook information. Lastly, we just cannot find textbooks/books of quality that discuss many important historical and current issues to the depth that television can provide so easily.

Instant History

Take for instance the Gulf War. It happened, how long ago? But how long will it be before it is in the textbooks? Will it then merely be the historical perspective? At the time of the war however there were continual TV debates by laymen and experts, linked up instantaeously by satellite, who argued the relative merits of the war, the ethical implications, the results, the possible effects on world trade and world politics. The resulting discussions and opinions of a whole range of people, from the woman in the street to the generals, historians, arms experts and the bureaucrats provided unique and momentous insights into the political, administrative and even media workings in our society at large.

Television reporting of scientific advances, critical decisions, catastrophes and other problems are practically instantaneous, you don't have to hear about it days (months?, years?) later in a form "modified" by a government/bureaucracy for public consumption. It is impossible that a decision from President Clinton about bombing Baghdad will go unquestioned. "Why did you do it?" "Wasn't there another choice?" "What will be the consequences?".

Where will we go to-day?

For me, one of the most exciting things about television is where it can take you. From the bottom of the ocean out to the ozone layer, from deep in the body to close up pictures of Saturn. Through television I can virtually walk into a science lab that has just made an important new discovery about cancer, or see and talk with a great humanitarian working in the desert in Somalia. I get to have an opinion, right or wrong, on whether they should be cutting down the jungles in the Amazon, or using euthanasia or whether the official version of what happened in Vietnam is actually the truthful one. I get to talk, through reporters, with world leaders, scientists, social workers, adventurers and the man on the street in Boston who just saved a family from a fire. And in the main the reporters ask the same questions as I would "How did it feel?" "Why did you do it?" "What can we do to prevent this happening again?"

Often people say to me, "How do you make your kids watch these "boring" programs ?" Who said life and history were boring? Perhaps schools made us feel that way, about information - certainly our children are like sponges for all sorts of knowledge about all sorts of things and while they may have things they really love to watch they are very open-minded about invitations to find out more about something new. Perhaps it is in part because we as parents are interested in these things and are discriminatory about what we watch ourselves.

Discrimination

Obviously parents need to show control and be aware that our bad habits can be caught. However, our reasons for our "controlling TV watching" in the beginning, were not all that idealistic. Greg hates advertisements and feels they are akin to brainwashing and I hate cartoons as I feel they are really violent. We also both really enjoy reading and have read a lot to our kids over the years. Perhaps our children never had the opportunity to see TV as something you just turn on, plonk down in front of and watch whatever is on. Anyway as they have gotten older they have come to see TV as a useful medium and they just don't seem to find nature, maths, history, geography or science shows as "boring".

Comprehension

We have found that our children may not understand all of what is said in a program but because one of their parents usually watches the show with them we can answer any questions that arise by judicious use of the pause button on the video. We also tend to do what we did with reading, we expect that what they miss this time will be caught another time in another context. I remember when Greg read the Laura Ingalls Wilder books to Rebecca years ago there was much explaining and undoubtedly much was left not understood by Rebecca, but in the length of time everything becomes clear. The same happens with TV programs, we don't get our kids to do question and answer sheets about "what they learned" after watching a TV show, we just trust that they have learned something. We are always seeing the results of this trust in their learning through the sharp questions and comments we later have to field "Why would Nixon make that decision if he knew it could hurt his own soldiers?".

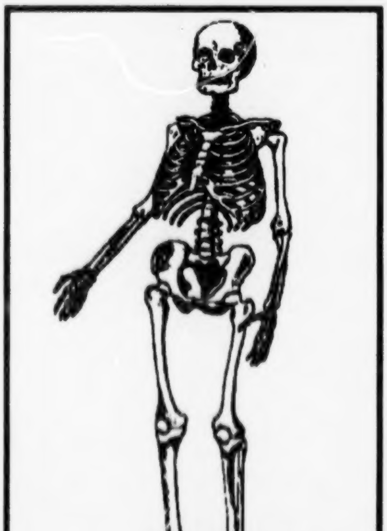
Even months later there will be comments by the children that show that the information was "filed" for reference and slotted into the "big picture" of their world. For instance Gregory and I were studying the properties of chlorine gas in science recently when he was able to slot some of that knowledge about its properties into other information he had about chlorine from the World of Chemistry and Eureka programs.

Evaluation

We carefully evaluate what we watch on TV. Yet not all of our choices are strictly "educational" . We all like gardening shows & sport - especially the Olympics. All programs depending how you use them, can be jumping off points for a whole range of learning initatives. Recently Greg has been recording the Little House on the Prairie TV programs (Saturday afternoon Channel 10) and he sits down with the children and watches them . Even Mary-Beth (3) likes to watch and ask questions. Why did they do that? Why did they treat her like that? Why is she sick in bed? Some of the topics discussed so far after watching Laura include rabies, interference in the natural environment, alcoholism, weather, harvesting, winnowing, animals, education and much more.

What will we watch?

The decisions about what to record and what to watch are made on a Sunday when Greg gets the Sunday Telegraph TV guide. This is the best



guide he has found because it has a good run down on each program for the week. He (they) then go through it page by page deciding what would be useful, entertaining and interesting for our children, now and in the future, given their different interests and need for information. (It is legal to record programs for a single educational use.) After recording these programs, Greg edits out the advertisements (if there are any programs recorded from commercial channels). This means that we have some really excellent resources for different topics as they arise. Some of the "for schools" programs in Maths and Physics (high school level) on the ABC are excellent and have been used in many different contexts by us.

Television Timetable

For example, the guide for recording in the Beirne household for the week commencing Sun July 11th looks like this ABC 3.50pm R.A.F. Documentary about Britian's fighting capacity in the air four years before WWII; SBS 7.30pm The Great Commanders series Horatio Nelson (we've watched Alexander the Great and Napoleon so far); SBS 8.30pm Out of the Past, anthropologists look at the economic processes of production and distribution of goods as one of the most ancient links between people of different cultures; Monday SBS 7.30 pm Timewatch Middle East (made in France) - part two of a look at events which shaped the history of the Middle East, from the end of the Suez crisis in 1956 to the Gulf War in 1991; SBS 8.30 Masterpiece: Beauty Saves the World - A history of the Bolshoi Ballet and its role in the establishment of classical ballet in Australia 50 years ago; Tuesday ABC 7.30am anthropology - The Faces of Culture (one of the excellent Open Learning for University programs); ABC 2.00 The Falklands War; Channel 10 8.30 Pavarotti in Central Park, SBS 8.30 Blood Brothers a four part documentary-drama about Australian Aboriginals; Thursday 7 am Open Learning: Statistics - Against All Odds 8 am For All Practical Purposes 9.30 The Big Picture - examines the most controversial intelligence operation of the Vietnam war, the Phoenix Program.

The Plug in Drug?

Many people have written about the mindlessness of television, also insisting that little of what is seen is retained and even less is applied. There are even some strong arguments for television's inefficacy as a teacher and information disseminator. This has not been our experience over the last six years. On the contrary we have found that TV, used properly, is a powerful learning tool. Given the popularity & great success of Open University courses here & in Britian, it needs to be said that others also feel the way we do. Perhaps it is merely a case of being apprehensive about the possible far reaching applicatons of this new technology rather than any real research about the negative effects of television.

Instantaneous, yet lasting.

One does not have to have much imagination to realise that television and other technologies, such as computer modems, CDs, faxs and video phones could make classrooms and schools obsolete, so criticism of one's competitor might just be the best mode of survival. Anyway, our family's experiences of controlled TV watching have been very positive. We feel our children have had the opportunity to see and investigate so much more than we ever dreamed was possible as children and adults. We also feel it encourages them to ask lots of questions that they may never have thought of before. It costs us virtually nothing to have the top experts in a myriad fields right here in our living room. Best of all if we missed what they said we can always rewind it and play it again.

In Defence of Television:
A Response

Anna Adams

Television is undoubtedly a medium that has had incredible impact on the everyday life of the average citizen, but there has been very little written in defence of it. Probably because publicly defending television has never been necessary. I don't think I have ever seen an advertisement anywhere encouraging people to buy televisions, (though during the "Life Be In It" campaign there were plenty of televised ads telling us to turn off the TV). From the time TV was first invented, persuading people to watch was not one of the medium's problems. Recently I saw (on TV) an isolated Indian village which had bought their first television collectively. The scene was filmed on a sunny Sunday morning & the entire population of this village was gathered under trees watching an Indian soapie. The usual religious observances were cheerfully abandoned with the arrival of this new novelty. Across the planet everyone loves television. Does it need defending?

Well, television has been under attack from many fronts - accused of being an addictive drug; passively contributing to the general lack of fitness of our citizens; it has been blamed for the level of violence in our society. It is hard to find anything written in praise of TV. It is almost as if no-one dared defend it, even though most of us watch it. The previous author's article very persuasively argued that television in conjunction with a video, could be an intelligent and exciting learning resource of the most up-to-date information, if parents made the effort to censor the mediocre.

Educate or harm ?

I am not convinced that the content of television alone can either educate or harm children. It is the social interaction that occurs as a result of the viewing that is educational or the lack of it that is harmful. Jo-Anne describes in her qualified defence of television, a high level of the use of social interaction between the members of her family stimulated through the use of television. I suggest it is this interaction that is the essential catalyst that transforms television from an addictive drug into an intelligent resource. Children learn from their families, not from the television, regardless of what programs they watch.

A family who collectively enjoys, talks and listens to each other about the events and/or characters of A Country Practice, Cosby Show, Roseanne or even the Simpsons, could be providing a more stimulating and educational experience than the experience of a child watching David Attenborough's Life on Earth, alone. Perhaps such series are providing the nuclear family with the twentieth century version of the extended family, some members of which traditionally have been a source of gossip, conjecture and, sometimes, just horrible examples, for everyone else. Many of these series offer learning about our society, its values and the complex nature of humans, if we want to make use of the material. I would include far more programs as having educational potential than those Jo-Anne selected.

What about violence?

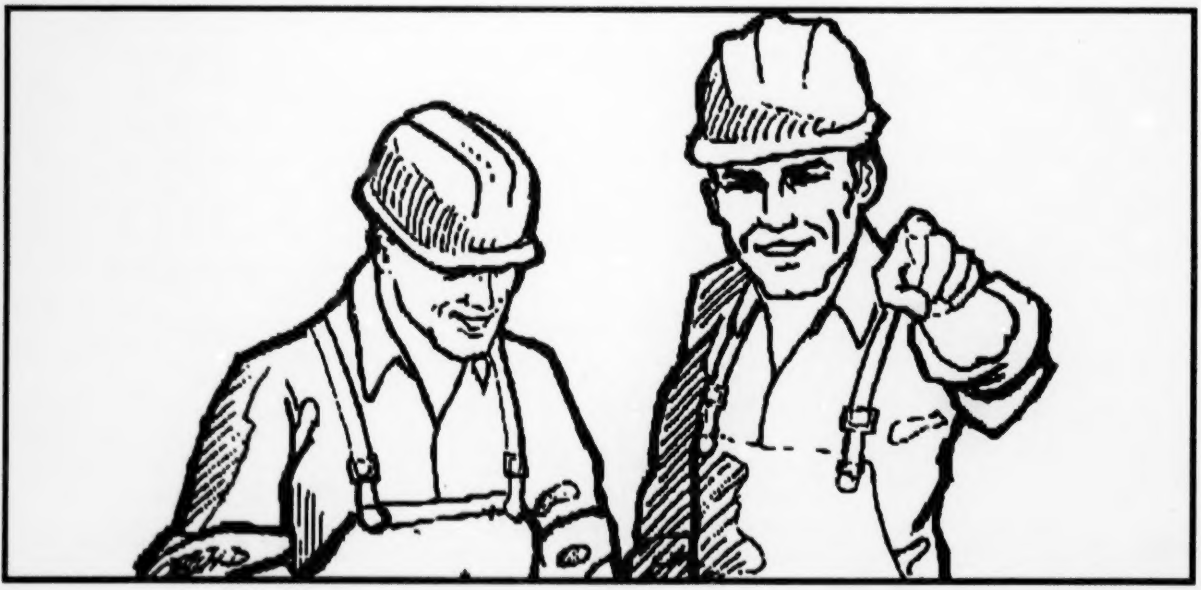
Am I saying even violence is OK so long as the whole family enjoys it and discusses it afterwards? It is possible for normal well-adjusted people to watch stories about people murdered in cold blood, while educating their children. Of the programs Jo-Anne listed, there were several war documentaries and a four-part series about the Australian Aborigines, which could not fail to include violent atrocities, all the more dreadful because they really occurred. The children rely on their parents to interpret these programs according to the values of their family. This would be the same if Jo-Anne had listed dramatised versions of the violent war between police and criminals instead.

Perhaps if my children were not homeschooled, I would be more concerned about a conflict of values creating contextual confusion for many programs. Possibly I would be more inclined to direct censorship if I thought the peer group was being influential. As it is, my children watch Simpson's because we all like it. Our reasons may not be the same as those of children's pop culture but that doesn't bother me because it isn't a problem.

Television is what we make of it. We, as families, are responsible. We gain nothing by abdicating our responsibility to the directors, producers, advertisers or the 'government' and placing the blame for society's ills on either television itself or its programming. Homeschoolers have worked hard to re-establish the family's importance in society. We would do well to maintain this stance. As homeschoolers, we need not worry if television transmits violence or unwholesome values because we are free to work with messages, however we like.

The strong family ship

Perhaps the violence and mediocrity of television can be likened to stormy weather at sea. Our children are not swimming alone in the ocean or in fragile canoes manned by other children. They are in the ship of the family. If the ship is unseaworthy, then it is probably better to avoid storms. Storms are dangerous. But in a strong and seaworthy vessel, a storm is not life-threatening. As homeschooling parents, we are not threatened by television because we are interested and concerned enough with our children's welfare to establish a context and interpretation for our children's viewing in accordance with our values. Perhaps it would be better for those who are concerned with storms, to focus on ways to help design better ships than to rail at the inconsistencies of the weather.



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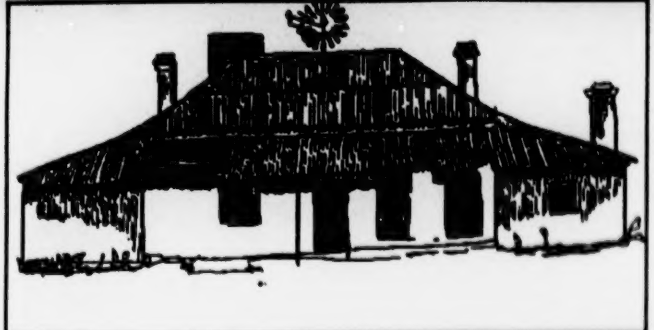

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Homeschooling events

End AUGUST1993

Science Club Meeting Chatswood
Contact Barbara Braathen on 436 2057. John Holt Bookstore attending.

28th SEPTEMBER 1993

Erskine Park Community Center Get Together for those with children 7 and under interested in homeschooling. Contact Fiona Manuel 623 3257. John Holt Bookstore attending.

OCTOBER 1993

Introduction to Homeschooling Seminar Conducted by Jo-Anne Beirne 5 hours cost $25 per family. Covers legalities, programming, evaluation, how and why to homeschool. Must RSVP to Jo-Anne on 6293727 before 25th September. John Holt Bookstore will be there.

10th -12th SEPT 1993 NSW

Yarrahappini Home Education Camp (Sth of Macksville)
Contact Joanne Brugmans on 066 897 473. Sphinx Rock, Kyogle Rd via Uki 2484

OCTOBER 1993
Queensland

Bundaberg Home Education Camp
8th -10th October write to MS 322 Gayndah 4625 Qld. Ph 071 611137.

MARCH 1994
New South Wales
A Celebration of Homeschooling

Contact Jo-Anne& Greg Beirne on 02 6293727 or write to PO Box 420 Kellyville 2153 for more information.

Kellyville Homeschool Meetings 1993 organised by Greg and Jo-Anne Beirne

Kellyville Park Memorial Drive Kellyville 2153. RSVP Dodie Conway 6394858. Cancelled if raining. A wide range of sports activities for all ages. Parents participation welcomed, discussions, John Holt Bookstore books available for perusal No particular religious affiliations. Usually plenty of older children attend.

*** 24th August**
*** 21st September**
*** 26th October**
*** 30th November**